

## **BOKS PROGRAM POSITIVELY IMPACTS KIDS' MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING DURING PANDEMIC**

*Study by Dalhousie University demonstrates the importance of physical activity and social connection for kids during COVID-19 lockdowns.*

**(Boston) May 10, 2021** – Today [BOKS \(Build Our Kids' Success\)](#), an initiative of the Reebok Foundation, announced the results of a research study conducted by Dalhousie University School of Health and Human Performance in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Results of the eight-week study showed that during times of uncertainty and increased stress, the BOKS program can be used as a tool to improve a child's overall wellbeing. Despite challenges brought on by the lockdowns, parents of participating students noticed improvements in their child's mood, energy level and sleep.

Read a full [copy of the report \[PDF\]](#).

"The COVID-19 pandemic has brought widespread disruption to schools, cancelled youth sports and restricted many leisure activities – leaving today's youth isolated in front of their screens and sedentary," said Kathleen Tullie, senior director, Reebok Social Purpose and executive director, BOKS. "I'm afraid we are just seeing the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the negative impact the pandemic has had on our children mentally and physically. Dalhousie's School of Health and Human Performance has shown that we can use physical activity and play as a tool to keep kids happy and healthy even in times of adversity."

"The positive impact that BOKS has had on children's physical, emotional and social wellbeing during the pandemic has been incredible" said Dr. Jeff Zahavich, from Dalhousie's School of Health and Human Performance, Kinesiology Division.

"We heard from many parents/guardians and BOKS program leaders that children were not achieving recommended levels of physical activity during the pandemic, and for some children, BOKS was the only form of consistent physical activity throughout periods of peak restriction."

Typically delivered in-person at schools and youth organizations, BOKS adapted its physical activity programming for a virtual environment at the onset of the pandemic. Through these digital offerings, which included 25-45 minute physical activity plans, teachers and volunteers were able to keep kids active while at home. Dalhousie was able to conduct its research through a series of surveys and in-depth individual interviews with students in Grades 4-6, their parents/guardians, and program leaders responsible for administering the BOKS program.

Key findings from the research showed that after two months of BOKS participation:

- Children experienced a significant decrease in psychological distress and sleep disturbance,
- Improvements in peer relationships, cognitive function and life satisfaction,
- Noticeable changes in children's mood, behavior and ability to resolve conflict.

The research team from Dalhousie University consisted of a diverse group of researchers with expertise in children's physical activity and assessment. This team conducted surveys and interviews with families, program leaders, and children to explore the impact the BOKS program had upon their daily lives while living in a pandemic.

Laurene Rehman (principal investigator) shared, "the chance to lead this research project was a great opportunity and enabled our team to examine the importance of meaningful physical activity for children especially during a pandemic."

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#### ABOUT BOKS

In today's screen obsessed culture, kids are the least active generation in history. This sedentary lifestyle is negatively impacting both their physical, mental and social health. BOKS is a physical activity program designed to reverse this public health crisis by getting kids active and establishing a lifelong commitment to health and fitness. Built on the science and research documented in the book, *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, BOKS provides free physical activity plans, training and support, to communities looking to establish and maintain impactful fitness and nutrition programs serving the whole child. Having grown from a single elementary school to a global initiative, BOKS is scalable and its impact is supported by scientific research. BOKS envisions a world in which movement is a foundational part of every child's day. For more information about BOKS visit [www.bokskids.org](http://www.bokskids.org).

#### ABOUT DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND HUMAN PERFORMANCE

Dalhousie's School of Health and Human Performance (HAHP) is situated within the Faculty of Health. The School is recognized worldwide for producing top graduates who contribute to not only their profession but also to the communities in which they live. HAHP offers undergraduate and graduate programs in Health Promotion, Kinesiology, Recreation Management and Therapeutic Recreation. In all of our programs, students develop critical-thinking skills, learn collaboratively, and engage in meaningful research.