

### Learning through Reflection

Experiential learning initiatives (ELI) are designed to promote "learning through reflection on doing" and to create opportunities for children to apply skills and knowledge learned within the context of their community, cultural background and own lived experiences.

Hand on learning also contributes to creating safe and supportive learning environments at home and at school. Creating a safe and supportive learning environment encourages children to open up to try new things, make mistakes, learn and grow and begin to see beyond their own experiences and become more socially aware of those around them. Continue reading for ideas, ELI in action, resources and more!

### Experiential learning initiatives that...

... support social-emotional health and youth risk behavior prevention within **ConnectEd** might look like:

- **Mindfulness/sensory-based learning**

*ELI in Action:* [Mindfulness Practices Transform Students' Lives](#)

- Mindfulness or mindful movement in the classroom and/or other school spaces
- Creation of sensory bins or sensory spaces
- Building a meditation path or community circle benches in the school garden
- Creation of a zen corner or space that provides items such as yoga mats, music/sound machine, sensory materials/fidget toys and manipulatives, books/prompt cards and games, etc. where students can process and regulate emotions.

- **Play-based learning**

*ELI in Action:* [A Creative Approach to Student Health and Wellness](#) and [Unique School Spaces Offer Joy, Freedom, and Health to Students and Community](#)

- Mix and mingle bins/carts for the classroom or travel throughout the school that include arts/crafts materials, toys such as wooden blocks, bean bags, parachutes, balls, etc., games and partner/group-based activities, etc.
- Integration of unstructured play into the school day where students are provided with materials/a safe environment to freely explore and play (e.g., outdoor exploration learning, recycled materials building, sensory science experiments, etc.)
- Creation of a social-emotional learning lab (also known as a creative expression lab)
- Creative expression programming that supports movement and processing of emotions (e.g., rhythm and dance activities, painting music, drama and other art-based activities, etc.)

- **Service learning**

*ELI in Action:* [Bringing a Community Together Through Healthy Activities](#)

- Playground or school grounds beautification/ clean-up
- Student-led community-based initiatives such as a healthy food drive, recycling program, etc.
- Student-organized volunteer initiatives within school community (e.g., repainting/upcycling elementary school gymnasium or winter coat drive)

- **Peer leadership**

*ELI in Action:* [Daily Social-Emotional Health Program Dramatically Reduces Depression & Anxiety in Students](#)

- Peer-to-peer mentoring programs before, during and/or after-school that support students in leading and engaging in conversation with peers to encourage collaboration and connection.



- Student-led storytime with younger students
- Student-led walking school bus or other school-based physical activity programs
- Student-led campaigns to bring awareness to current events/issues (e.g., impacts of bullying, dangers of vaping, etc.) and promote ways for students to take action

... support physical activity and active play within **EnergizEd** might look like:

- **Active Classrooms**

ELI in Action: [Turning Classrooms into Active Learning Rooms](#), [Social Studies With a Side of Snowshoes: Walking Their Way to a Healthy Education](#) and [Pandemic Inspires PE Teacher to Get Creative](#)

- Physical activity integrated in planned academic instruction (e.g., movement integration into daily lesson plans and activities such as math (e.g., answering times tables with jumping jacks, spelling with yoga, etc.))
- Physical activity integrated outside of planned academic instruction (e.g., physical activity boosts, brain breaks and mindful movement included during and in-between lessons/class periods or installation of flexible seating that promotes movement (e.g., pedal bike desks, standing desks, balance balls and boards, wobble chairs, etc.))

- **Active/Sensory Hallways**

ELI in Action: [New Equipment Helps Keep Students Active Indoors](#)

- Active sensory hallway installations that promote self-regulation and movement through fine and gross motor skill development during transitions

- **Active Recess**

ELI in Action: [Jump-Starting a More Active Recess](#) and [Getting 60 Minutes of Play Per Day](#)

- Playground/playspace modifications such as the painting/stenciling of blacktop games that promotes active play
- Student-led games and sports teams
- Walking/mileage clubs during recess
- Indoor recess activities that promote movement and play (e.g., mix and mingle bins/carts for the classroom or travel throughout the school that include arts/crafts materials, toys such as wooden blocks, bean bags, parachutes, balls, etc., games and partner/group-based activities, etc.)
- Integration of unstructured play into the school day where students are provided with materials/a safe environment to freely explore and play (e.g., outdoor exploration learning, recycled materials building, sensory science experiments, etc.)

... that support nutrition education and promotion within **NourishEd** might look like:

- **Farm to School**

ELI in Action: [Overbrook School Plants More than Seeds](#)

- Creation of farm-to-school lessons and projects where students can explore the local growing/lifecycle of food through role play and art, composting and food waste through kitchen scrap gardening, etc.
- Creation of a school garden – raised garden beds outdoors, container gardens or tower gardens in the classroom or other school spaces.

- **Community-based Learning**

ELI in Action: [Not Kidding Around: Goat Yoga Comes to Metro Nashville Public Schools](#) and [Weekly Lessons and Local Foods Support Nutrition Education](#)

- Virtual and/or in-person field trips to



- local farms or orchards where children can learn about agriculture and food science
- grocery stores and farmers markets where children can learn about healthy food choices
- local food bank where children can learn about food access and food waste
- organics and recycling center where children can learn about inorganic and organic materials
- etc.
- Regular expert speakers to support lessons and field trip extensions throughout the school year
- **Exploring with Food**  
*ELI in Action: [Culturally Relevant Cooking Classes Inspire Kids' Creativity](#) and [Developing Pottstown's Palates with Virtual Cooking Classes](#)*
  - Healthy taste tests that supports exploration in trying new things and promotes healthy alternatives to unhealthy foods
  - Cooking classes that explore cultural diversity in culinary practices and demonstrate how food is social in nature
  - Healthy snacking that support autonomy and responsible decision making or leverages mindful eating practices
- **Nutrition Promotion**  
*ELI in Action: [Student Brings Healthy Habits to More Kids with 5K Fundrasier](#)*
  - Healthy fundraisers where students and families play a role in planning and leading including
    - active fundraisers such as walk-a-thons, fun runs, dance-a-thons and hop-a-thons, or host a sports tournament for dodgeball, volleyball, soccer, basketball, bag toss, etc.
    - non-edibles such as flowers, seed packets, school merch, school supplies, holiday gifts, etc.
    - service fundraisers such as providing childcare for "parents night out," car washes, sports clinics, coat check at school dances or parent events, etc.
    - healthy eating such as cook-a-thon, creation of a community-led cookbook with recipes shared by families, garden event, etc.
  - Healthy celebrations that promote physical activity, healthy eating and connectedness or a student-led or co-developed healthy celebrations idea book that include celebration ideas for holidays and milestones
  - Healthy Rewards where students can self-select health rewards or a student-led or co-developed healthy and/or non-food rewards toolkit or bulletin board.

#### Additional Action for Healthy Kids Resources:

- [Action for Healthy Kids Resource Library](#)
- [Exploring the Mind-Body Connection: Social-Emotional Health, Physical Activity & Nutrition](#)
- [Making the Connection: Social-Emotional Learning and Physical Activity](#)
- [Making the Connection: Social-Emotional Learning and Nutrition](#)
- [Building Family-School Partnerships through Social-Emotional Learning \(español\)](#)
- [Building Family-School Partnerships through Physical Activity & Active Play \(español\)](#)
- [Building Family-School Partnerships through Nutrition Education \(español\)](#)