

Health and Physical Education and Daily Physical Activity



Did you know?

- By the time the average student graduates from high school, he or she will have spent 15,000 hours watching TV, and just 500 hours in Physical and Health Education programs.
- Over half of Canadian children and youth are not active enough for optimal growth and development.
- Physical, emotional, and mental health are key predictors of future quality of life for our kids.
- With 95% of Ontario's children attending public schools, our local schools are the ideal place to promote mental health, healthy eating, and increased physical activity for students.
- Only 40% of Ontario's elementary schools have specialist teachers in physical and health education; most are part-time; and only half of them teach all students in the school!
- Most students stop taking Physical and Health Education after grade 9.

What do students learn in Health and Physical Education (H&PE)?

- Students are required to take Health and Physical Education (H&PE) from Kindergarten through grade 8.
- High school students must earn one credit in Health and Physical Education in order to graduate.
- A new H&PE curriculum is being introduced, which will focus more on developing and supporting life-long healthy habits.
- The curriculum for elementary students teaches fundamental movement skills, healthy living, and active participation. *Healthy living* includes healthy eating, growth and development, sexual health, personal safety and injury prevention, and substance use and abuse. *Fundamental movement skills* include locomotion/traveling, manipulation, and stability.

Active participation includes physical activity, physical fitness, living skills, and safety.

- In high school, the program continues to build these skills, with a greater emphasis on the living skills component, to help address the unique physical and emotional challenges that adolescents face. The Health and Physical Education courses in Grades 9 and 10 are made up of four strands: physical activity, active living, healthy living, and living skills.

What Difference Do Specialist Teachers Make?

- Specialist physical education teachers receive extra training to acquire the specialized knowledge needed to teach health and physical education.
- Specialist teachers deliver more effective and consistent physical and health education programs than regular classroom teachers.
- Specialist teachers can provide the necessary leadership to build a health-promoting environment throughout the entire school community.

What is DPA (Daily Physical Activity)?

- In 2007, the provincial government introduced "Daily Physical Activity" (DPA) for all elementary schools, requiring schools to provide 20 minutes of sustained physical activity every day.

Why are DPA and Health & Physical Education so important?

- Regular physical activity is essential for the healthy growth of children and youth.
- Students spend a large part of their time in school, making it the perfect place to provide programs that promote health and well-being.
- Research has shown that physical activity



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increases students' ability to focus and pay attention in class, and may result in better performance on academic achievement tests.

- Teenagers who engage in regular physical activity have lower levels of anxiety and depression.
- Physical activity helps students to maintain a healthy body weight.
- Schools can provide health promotion programs and activities that do not depend on a student's wealth or background.

What can parents do to ensure students have access to an effective, comprehensive Health and Physical Education program?

- Talk to your principal and school council. Let them know that quality physical education programs are important to you. Ask how your school can support physical activity opportunities for students.
- Spread the word! Use your school newsletter, website, or bulletin boards to feature articles and information about the importance of a good quality health and physical education program and its benefits for students.
- Write to your local newspaper or make a deputation to your school board or city council.
- Ask your school council to plan community events that focus on increasing physical activity, e.g. Family Sports Night.
- At home, encourage all family members to participate in some kind of activity every day – walk, bike, dance, or play catch! Find things that the whole family can do – it is a great way to spend time together.

For More Information:

- The Heart and Stroke Foundation has a wealth of information for parents, kids and teachers. You'll find tips about healthy eating, lots of fun programs, and strategies to increase physical activity both at home and school. Go to www.heartandstroke.on.ca.
- The Ministry of Education has information for both educators and families, including how to create a healthier school, healthy foods and beverages and the Healthy Schools Recognition Program. Go to www.edu.gov.on.ca and look for the link to "Healthy Schools".
- People for Education's website has research on Physical and Health Education Programs in Ontario's schools, and links to international research and programs in other provinces. Go to www.peopleforeducation.com/healthyschools.
- The Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (Ophea) has many programs, activities and services for schools and communities to enable children and youth to lead healthy active lives. The majority of Ophea's programs and services are available for free. For more information visit www.ophea.net.
- Many municipalities offer free, subsidized, and low-cost fitness programs and activities. Contact your local Parks and Recreation department to find out what's available in your area.
- The Federal government has a Children's Fitness Tax Credit of up to \$500 for expenses paid to register a child in a program of physical activity. For more information, visit: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/fitness/>