

Health and Physical Education (H&PE) is the key to making Ontario the Healthiest Province in Canada



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Ontario is not Canada's healthiest province – but it could be!

Study after study shows Ontario children are becoming less healthy and active.

- This puts them at greater risk for a host of chronic diseases and places a crushing burden on our provincial health care spending.
- The good news is that by learning to be healthy and active now, children can prevent chronic disease later in life.

Take a look at "Jamie" who is one of a small minority (32 per cent) of the 2.1 million children and youth who attend Ontario's 5,000 publicly funded schools and actually attains the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity daily¹.

By simply being physically active on a regular basis, "Jamie" is less likely to grow up to be among the two-thirds of Ontarians over 45 who have one or more chronic disease(s)².

According to the National Scientific Council³, the early development of cognitive skills, emotional well-being, social competence and sound physical and mental health builds a strong foundation for success well into the adult years. In order to be a fully functioning member of society, "Jamie" must be taught to develop these competencies.

By 2014, Ontario will be spending more than \$40 billion (half of all available provincial revenue) on health care⁴.

Ontario is lagging behind other provinces in terms of its investment in healthy living.

- Ontario invests only \$7.40 per person per year total in health behaviour strategies.
- By contrast British Columbia's invests \$21.00 per person per year, and Quebec \$16.80 per person per year⁵.

1 Active Healthy Kids Canada. (2010). Healthy Habits Start Earlier Than You Think. The Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Toronto, ON.
2 Association of Local Public Health Agencies & Ontario Public Health Association. (2009). Understanding the Role of Public Health in Chronic Disease Prevention. Available from: http://www.alphaweb.org/docs/lib_012682226.pdf
3 National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007). The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, p. 4. Available from: http://www.developingchild.net/pubs/persp/pdf/Science_Early_Childhood_Development.pdf
4 Skinner, B.J. & Rovere, M. (2009). Paying More, Getting Less: Measuring the Sustainability of Government Health Spending in Canada: 2009 Report. Available from: http://www.fraseramerica.org/commerce.web/product_files/PayingMoreGettingLess2009_US.pdf
5 Manuel, D.G., Creatore, M.I., Rosella, L.C., & Henry, D.A. (2009). What Does it Take to Make a Healthy Province? A Benchmark Study of Jurisdictions in Canada and Around the World with the Highest Levels of Health and the Best Health Behaviours. ICES Investigative Report. Toronto, ON: Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences. Available from: <http://www.ices.on.ca/file/Healthy%20province%20November%20release.pdf>

Health and Physical Education (H&PE) is the fastest, least expensive and most effective way to make Ontario the healthiest province in Canada.

The Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (OCDPA) is urging all Ontarians to help make Ontario the Healthiest Province in Canada. Ophea believes the best way to do this is to implement the revised Health and Physical Education (H&PE) Curriculum.

Ophea believes the revised H&PE Curriculum is the most significant health promotion intervention the province has ever seen. Ophea strongly supports the vision of the revised Curriculum, which states that the knowledge and skills acquired in the program will benefit students throughout their lives, helping them thrive in an ever-changing world¹. It will:

- Emphasize the importance of schools as a health promotion setting that reaches all children and youth.
- Directly reach 2.1 million students attending Ontario's 5,000 publicly funded schools including at risk population subgroups such as children and youth of low socio-economic status, rural/urban communities, remote/Northern communities, ethno-cultural groups, as well as Anglophone and Francophone communities.

The H&PE Curriculum addresses a comprehensive range of topics including physical activity, safety and injury prevention, healthy eating, substance use, mental health, and human development and sexual health, and is the only curriculum that integrates the learning of important living skills such as critical thinking, personal skills, and interpersonal skills. If fully implemented, it will enable Ontario's children and youth to value, participate in, and make a lifelong commitment to healthy active living.

The revised H&PE Curriculum is the most significant health promotion intervention the province has ever seen, and will directly reach 2.1 million students.



Two practical recommendations from Ophea to harness the power of the revised Health and Physical Education (H&PE) Curriculum.

1 Support implementation with training and resources.

As recommended in the 2004 Chief Medical Officer of Health Report: Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives, we must ensure professionals have access to timely, high quality training and technical assistance to support their work¹.

In an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted on behalf of Ophea, a relatively small percentage of parents of elementary school children are satisfied with the quality of their children's Health or Physical Education classes in the Catholic and Public school systems, although at least three-quarters of them cite these classes as important².

Today, less than half of Ontario's elementary schools have a specialist H&PE teacher³, meaning that the implementation of the revised H&PE Curriculum will fall largely to Ontario's 77,000 generalist teachers, who often receive little training, experience or comfort in addressing all areas of the curriculum.

A provincial survey conducted by Ophea in 2009 revealed that 98% of the 1,200 educators surveyed indicated a need for support in implementing the revised Curriculum⁴.

In the words of one respondent, "Please assume that the teacher teaching H&PE at the elementary level is not a specialist. Although I am not a specialist in H&PE, I feel that I am able to provide a well-rounded program given the proper resources."⁵

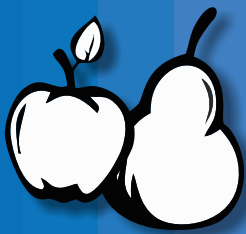
This presents a unique opportunity to mobilize multi-sector partnerships to develop high quality, comprehensive resources and provide professional development and training to support healthy active living, which in turn, can impact a number of government priorities.

2 Adopt the H&PE policy as a comprehensive strategy for healthy active living, allowing all levels of government, school boards, social service organizations, the private sector and public health organizations to work together to support common outcomes for Ontario's children and youth.

Ontario does not currently have a comprehensive strategy for healthy active living. The H&PE policy provides a foundation for cross-ministerial and cross-sectoral collaboration to fill this gap.

Health and physical education programs are most effective when they are delivered in healthy schools and when students' learning is supported by school staff, families, and communities. Supporting the implementation of the H&PE policy can address the objectives of other key provincial strategies such as Daily Physical Activity, School Food and Beverage Policy, Safe Schools, After-School Strategy, the Ontario Public Health Standards, Poverty Strategy, Roots of Violence, Equity and Inclusive Education, Childhood Obesity Strategy, Foundations for a Healthy School, and full day learning for 4- and 5-year olds in an integrated manner.

"We need to build partnerships across all levels and across all sectors [...] like public health nurses, schools, school boards, parks and recreation, community organizations and community agencies who have an interest in the delivery of school-based services and get them involved." - Health Promoter quote⁶



Preparing future generations to make the "right decisions" regarding their health and social responsibility will benefit all Ontarians.

1 Chief Medical Officer of Health Report. (2004). Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives. Ontario. Available from: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/ministry_reports/cmoh04_report/healthy_weights_112404.pdf

2 Ipsos-Reid. 2010. Available from: <http://www.ipsos-na.com/news-polls/pressrelease.aspx?id=5053>.

3 People For Education. (2010). Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2010. Available from: <http://www.peopleforeducation.com/annualreport/ONpublicschools2010>

4,5 Ophea. (2009). Health and Physical Education Elementary Educator Needs Assessment Survey and Focus Group Results (Internal Document).

6 Angra, I. (2010). Ophea Public Health Support Project: Needs Assessment of School Public Health Staff (Internal Document).

Why we should invest in Jamie's health and well being now and in the future.

Investing in healthy active children will deliver tangible health results for life

- Healthy, active children become healthy, active adults¹.
- An investment in child health is an investment in Ontario's future. Quite simply, health in infancy and the early years contributes to healthy children and youth, and healthy children and youth contribute to health throughout the lifespan².

Investing in healthy active children will improve the economic health of Ontario

- Children and youth need to be a priority population for the entire Ontario government; we should be committed to a smarter and healthier Ontario.
- Ontario's future economic health depends on the academic success and optimal health and well-being of children and youth like “Jamie”.³
- In Ontario, an examination of the effect of Ophea's Living Schools Initiative showed that increased focus on students' health in schools led to positive changes in their academic performance, as measured by Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) test scores⁴.

Preparing future generations to make the “right decisions” regarding their health and social responsibility will benefit all Ontarians.

Research shows that “health and education success are intertwined: schools cannot achieve their primary mission of education if students are not healthy”.⁵

An examination of the effect of a comprehensive school health model on academic performance showed that increased focus on students' health in schools led to positive changes in their academic performance⁶.

By enhancing cross ministerial cooperation especially between the Ministries of Health Promotion, Education, and Children and Youth Services we can better facilitate the development of a generation that will get a healthy start and realize their full potential.

By building a skilled and employable workforce, a creative cultural community and healthier individuals and communities we can also lessen the burden on our healthcare and social service systems.

Ensuring that “Jamie” and all other students receive quality H&PE instruction as a fundamental part of public education is recognized as being one of the most effective ways of providing children with knowledge and skills that will help them make safe and informed decisions now and in the future.

About Ophea

Since 1921, Ophea has been working to support the health and learning of children and youth in Ontario. Ophea is a not-for-profit organization led by the vision that all children value, participate in, and make a lifelong commitment to healthy active living. Ophea works in partnership with school boards, public health, government, non-government organizations, and private sector organizations to develop groundbreaking programs and services that support healthy active schools and communities. For more information, visit www.ophea.net.

1 Healthy Ontarians, Healthy Ontario: Ministry of Health Promotion's Strategic Framework. Available from: http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/english/strategicframework/strategicframework_en.pdf

2 Ministry of Health Promotion. (2010). Child Health Guidance Document. Ontario. Available from: <http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/healthy-communities/public-health/guidance-docs/ChildHealth.PDF>

3 Health Council of Canada. (2006). Their Future is Now: Healthy Choices for Canada's Children & Youth. Toronto, Ontario. Available from: http://www.healthcouncilcanada.ca/docs/rpts/2006/HCC_ChildHealth_EN.pdf

4 Guertin, M. (2007). An Examination of the Effect of a Comprehensive School Health Model on Academic Achievement: The Effect of a Living School on EQAO Test Scores. Toronto, ON: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

5 Story, M., Nannery, M.S. & Schwartz, M.B. (2009). Schools and Obesity Prevention: Creating School Environment and Policies to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. The Milbank Quarterly, 87(1), p. 72.

6. Ophea. (2007). 2007 Living School Highlight Report. Available from: http://www.livingschool.ca/upload/LivingSchool2007_HighlightReport.pdf