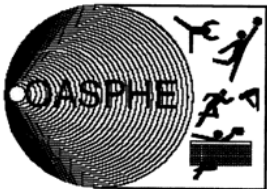


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# What do secondary educators think of the current Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum?

*Summary of Findings from the 2006 Secondary Health and Physical Education Curriculum Review Survey and Related Literature for consideration in Curriculum Review*



OASPHE (Ontario Association for the Supervision of Physical and Health Education)  
Ophea (Ontario Physical and Health Education Association)

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## Overview

In September 2007, the Ontario Ministry of Education began the review of the Health and Physical Education (H&PE) Curriculum. In preparation for this review, OASPHE (The Ontario Association for the Supervision of Physical and Health Education) in partnership with Ophea, conducted the *Secondary Health and Physical Education Curriculum Review Survey* with educators in the fall of 2006 to gather feedback about the current H&PE curriculum.

Secondary educators across the province had the opportunity to complete the survey, which was offered in both French and English. A statistically significant and regionally representative number responded, and were indicative of half the school boards from across Ontario. The majority of respondents were teachers followed by consultants, coordinators and superintendents.

Findings from the survey have been summarized into key messages to be considered in the Health and Physical Education curriculum review process. They have been organized by course to reflect messages in relation to the *overall curriculum* as well as messages that address the *specific strands* of the curriculum for all secondary level courses:

1. [Healthy Active Living Education \(HALE\) \(PPL\) - Grades 9 – 12](#)  
*Strands: Physical Activity, Active Living, Healthy Living, and Living Skills*
2. [Health for Life \(PPZ30\)– Grade 11](#)  
*Strands: Determinants of Health, Community Health and Vitality*
3. [Exercise Science \(PSE4U\) – Grade 12](#)  
*Strands: Biological Basis of Movement, Motor Development, Physical Activity and Sports in Society*
4. [Recreation and Fitness Leadership \(PLF4C\) – Grade 12](#)  
*Strands: Leadership, Facilitation of Recreation and Leisure, and Physical Fitness and Well-Being*

These are presented in the following pages and will be widely circulated amongst secondary level educators across Ontario to support them in providing input that will inform the revision of the H&PE curriculum. They will also be provided directly to the Ministry of Education to this end, and shared with other relevant ministries, non-government agencies and coalitions as appropriate.

## Key Messages Regarding the Overall Curriculum

### **1. The Introduction of the *Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 - 10: Health and Physical Education, 1999* and *Ontario Curriculum Grades 11 - 12: Health and Physical Education, 2000* should be revised and updated.**

43% of the respondents indicated the need for revisions to the introduction section of the curriculum. It was felt that key learnings/essential learnings for the curriculum need to be included and that key messages also need to be stated about inclusion and differentiated instruction (e.g., for English Language Learners , and the special needs population). The section dealing with Focus courses also needs to be clarified.

### **2. The Health and Physical Education curriculum does a "better than average" job in the preparation of students for lifelong healthy active living and in addressing physical activity and current societal concepts and issues.**

72% of respondents indicated that the curriculum does an above average job in preparing students for lifelong healthy active living, and in addressing physical activity and current societal concepts and issues. However some improvement is necessary since 20% of the respondents felt that the curriculum expectations are only "somewhat better than average".

### **3. An additional Health and Physical Education mandatory credit is needed in Health and Physical Education at the secondary level in order to alleviate the problem of "too many expectations to cover" and to enhance the development of an appropriate scope and sequence from grades nine through twelve.**

97% of the respondents indicated that there should be a second mandatory H&PE credit. A second mandatory H&PE credit would help address the current societal issues of physical inactivity that relate to obesity and overall healthy growth and development, by increasing the amount of physically active time among youth. An array of research from the 2007 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity Among Children and Youth indicates a serious decline in physical activity levels as children transition and move through adolescence, with corresponding increases in sedentary "screen time" and relationships to challenge both physical and mental health at this age.

## Healthy Active Living Education (HALE) – Grades 9 – 12 (PPL10 – PPL40)

### Key Messages: Overall Course

- 1. 86% of respondents indicated that they are able to address 76% -99%, or 100% of the curriculum expectations for HALE in their instruction. The most commonly stated reasons for not addressing all expectations were “too many expectations” and a “lack of adequate resources”.**

Comments reveal that the identification of too many expectations actually related to an inadequate amount of time to deliver the expectations. In particular it was felt that the grade nine HALE course involves too many Healthy Living and Living Skill expectations.

The lack of adequate resources was cited as another reason for teacher inability to account for all the curriculum expectations. This included the inability of the facilities to accommodate the delivery of the curriculum, inadequate budget, and equipment restraints.

- 2. Most (87%) of respondents stated that the Physical Fitness overall and specific expectations (Active Living Strand) should be changed to be consistent and state the same message in all grades. The majority of these respondents (62% of the 87%) stated that they preferred the expectations to use the verbs “maintain or improve” rather than “demonstrate improvement”.**

Comments included:

- The present H & PE curriculum includes several different verbs in that the specific expectations for grades 9 – 12 state “students will maintain or improve personal fitness levels...”, whereas the overall expectations vary between “demonstrate improvement in personal health-related physical fitness” and “demonstrate personal health-related physical fitness”.
- Physical Fitness: The overall expectation: “demonstrate improvement in personal health-related fitness” (Grade 9 HALE) and “demonstrate improved physical fitness” (Grade 11 HALE) are problematic since students are subjected to fitness testing and grades based on “improved” fitness.
- These tests are often faulty by nature and not fair. This also then leads to courses being heavily fitness-focused and not broad enough to promote participation in a variety of activities to encourage lifelong participation.

- 3. In order for students to lead a healthy and active lifestyle, modifications need to be made to the secondary H&PE curriculum to address topics that are not currently addressed.**

Suggestions included:

- an increased emphasis on individual/outdoor activities and a decreased emphasis on traditional sport;
- at least one more mandatory H & PE credit beyond grade nine;
- a scope and sequence for leadership skills from grades 9 – 12; and
- students need to know the appropriate fitness tools in order to assess their own levels of fitness.

## HALE Key Messages: Findings Regarding Specific Strands

The overall and specific expectations in the secondary Healthy Active Living Education (HALE) curriculum are organized into four distinct but related strands. In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate which one of the four strands required the most revision. Most respondents indicated that Healthy Living (39%) and Living Skills (38%) required the most revision followed by Physical Activity (16%) and then Active Living (8%)

Healthy Living	Living Skills	Physical Activity	Active Living
<p>39% of respondents indicate that the Healthy Living strand requires revision as there are:</p> <p>a. "too many expectations to cover" 53% indicated that there is too much content and not enough time to sufficiently address the expectations.</p> <p>b. "overlaps in knowledge and skills" 53% indicated that there is too much overlap between grades 9 and 10 and between grades 11 and 12. It was felt that there is too much overlap in content and in flow from grade to grade and that the curriculum expectations are too similar.</p> <p>Identified strengths of the Healthy Living Strand included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ expectations allow for a broad range of teaching assessment strategies;</li> <li>▪ expectations are relevant to students and have good connections to student commitment for lifelong healthy active living;</li> <li>▪ the expectations provide students with the necessary skills in order to make healthy lifestyle choices;</li> <li>▪ there is a good interrelationship between healthy living and living skills e.g., decision-making as it relates to human sexuality and substance use and abuse;</li> <li>▪ very pertinent topics, address the challenges that teenagers face primarily related to relationships, and substance abuse;</li> <li>▪ all students can be assessed in a successful way.</li> </ul>	<p>38% indicated that the Living Skills strand requires revisions as there were:</p> <p>a. "too many expectations to cover" and that there was not enough time to cover all the expectations. In particular the section on conflict resolution was identified as including too much to cover appropriately. Additional issues were identified with the difficulty of assessing the demonstration of the living skills.</p> <p>b. 28% of respondents also indicated that there were "overlaps in knowledge and skills"</p> <p>. It was also felt that there were more examples needed about how to integrate Living Skills with other strands in the curriculum and that it was difficult for special needs population to cover all the expectations.</p> <p>Identified strengths of the Living Skills Strand expectations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living Skill expectations do not appear in any other subject area yet are essential skills for young people as they help them make positive decisions about health and give them skills to lead healthy active lives.</li> <li>▪ relevant to the students appropriate (age/grade) and do-able (can be done successfully) by most students</li> <li>▪ easily understood – practical/essential lifelong skills</li> <li>▪ can be assessed in active setting</li> </ul>	<p>Only 16% of respondents indicated this strand required revision. Those who did (29%) indicated there were:</p> <p>a. "too many expectations to cover" and</p> <p>b. "gaps in knowledge and skills" for this strand was indicated by 18% of respondents, It is felt there is a lack of specific examples that reflect lifelong and non-traditional activities vs. traditional sports and there was a need for more emphasis on recreational activities.</p> <p>In another survey question 73% of respondents stated that expectations related to the four sport/games categories of target, striking/fielding, net/wall and invasion/territory should be created within the Physical Activity strand of the Health and Physical Education curriculum.</p> <p>Identified strengths of the Physical Activity strand included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations are appropriate and do-able (can be done successfully) by most students and</li> <li>• The expectations allow for a broad range of teaching/assessment strategies</li> </ul>	<p>Only 8% felt this strand required revision with 50% of those indicating there are "too many expectations to cover" and 38% indicating a combination of 'gaps in knowledge and skills' and "inappropriate for the grade level" as issues.</p> <p>Identified strengths of the Active Living strand expectations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they are current, appropriate and do-able (can be done successfully) by most students, and</li> <li>• they allow for a broad range of teaching/assessment strategies".</li> </ul>

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## Health for Life – Grade 11 (PPZ30)

### Key Messages: Overall Course

**Note:** The response rate for the Health for Life course was quite low in comparison to the other courses. However, the information has been summarized as the input and comments from these respondents can still be useful in providing some direction for the H&PE curriculum review.

#### **1. 79% of respondents indicated that they are able to address 76% - 99%, or 100% of the curriculum expectations in their instruction of Health for Life.**

More than half of the teachers that were not able to address as much of the curriculum stated that the reason for not accounting for the remainder of the expectations was that there are

a. "too many expectations":

- it is difficult to address the curriculum expectations with special needs students
- there is too much theory and not enough practical

b. Some also responded that some "expectations were not relevant":

- there is no need to include topics such as food poisoning and food allergies;
- leave the air quality, water quality and pollution to the science environmental studies courses;
- CPR is covered by all grade 9 students so there is no need to cover it here; and
- it is difficult to assess community agencies.

## Health for Life - Key Messages: Findings Regarding Specific Strands

The overall and specific expectations in the secondary Health for Life curriculum are organized into three distinct but related strands. In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate which one of the three strands required the most revision. Most respondents (50%) indicated that the Determinants of Health required the most revision followed by Community Health (33%) and then Vitality (17%).

Determinants of Health	Community Health	Vitality
<p>50% of respondents indicated the Determinants of Health strand requires revision as there are “too many expectations to cover”</p> <p>An identified strength of the Determinants of Health strand was that the “expectations within the strand have good connections to student commitment for lifelong healthy active living.”</p>	<p>33% of respondents felt that the Community Health strand required revision as there were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. “too many expectations to cover”. While expectations were considered to be good, it was felt that they are very in-depth and require so much time that it is not possible to address all of them</li> <li>b. the expectations are not relevant, e.g., analysis of how “research and medical advances influence the prevention and control of health problems”</li> </ul> <p>It was also stated that there was a lack of community resources (e.g., alternative health care services) to deliver the course.</p> <p>An identified strength of the Community Health strand expectations was that the “expectations have good connections to student commitment for lifelong healthy active living”.</p>	<p>Only 17% of respondents indicated the need for revision to the Vitality strand.</p> <p>However in another survey question, 96% of the respondents indicated they would like to add an overall expectation in this strand that includes an active participation component (e.g., students will participate in a variety of physical activities to demonstrate an active lifestyle).</p> <p>Comments also included that schools should have the option of letting students meet some of the expectations through participation in physical activities.</p> <p>An identified strength of the Vitality strand was that the expectations were considered relevant.</p>

## Exercise Science – Grade 12 (PSE4U)

### Key Messages: Overall Course

#### 1. 96% of respondents indicated that they are able to address 76% - 99%, or 100% of the curriculum expectations in their instruction of Exercise Science.

More than half of the teachers that were not able to address as much of the curriculum stated that the reason for not accounting for the remainder of the expectations was that there are “too many expectations”. Comments included:

- there is not enough time to address and evaluate all of the expectations – for example many emphasize one section of the course to the exclusion or detriment of the other sections
- student background knowledge requires a larger portion of time be spent on the Biological basis of Movement
- there should be two grade 12 University courses – one for the Biological Basis of Movement and some of the Motor Development and the second for the Physical Activity and Sports in Society

In addition it was noted that a lack of resources, particularly for small schools, inhibited the implementation of this curriculum as the small schools can't afford to purchase textbooks. There was also some concern about the organization and focus of this course with regard to the time intended for each strand.

### Exercise Science - Key Messages: Findings Regarding Specific Strands

The overall and specific expectations in the secondary Exercise Science curriculum are organized into three distinct but related strands. In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate which one of the three strands required the most revision. Most respondents (45%) indicated that the Biological Basis of Movement required the most revision followed by Physical Activity and Sports in Society (40%) and the Motor Development (15%).

Biological Basis of Movement	Physical Activity & Sports in Society	Motor Development
<p>45% of respondents indicated that this strand requires revision as there are “too many expectations to cover”.</p> <p>It was felt that there are gaps in student knowledge, as the curriculum requires a large amount of prior learning e.g., on body systems and then there is there is not enough time for last 2 strands (Motor Development and Physical Activity and Sport in Society)</p> <p>However there are several notable curriculum strengths in this strand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the expectations are relevant in preparing students for a university destination pathway; and</li> <li>▪ the expectations allow for a broad range of teaching/assessment strategies</li> </ul>	<p>40% of respondents indicated that this strand required revision as there are “too many expectations to cover” and that the “expectations are not relevant”.</p> <p>Comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the number of expectations in this strand needs to be reduced if the other two are to be covered in the detail outlined in the curriculum expectations</li> <li>▪ the expectations are not relevant for a variety reasons including; lack of prior knowledge in the younger students e.g., in “analyzing the relationship between business and sports and physical activity”</li> <li>▪ for the students preparing for science courses this strand is not appropriate and some felt that this strand does not impact student preparation for university.</li> </ul> <p>Identified strengths of the Physical Activity and Sports in Society Strand expectations indicated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the expectations are “current” and “allow for a broad range of teaching/assessment strategies.</li> </ul>	<p>Only 15% of respondents indicated that the Motor Development strand requires revision, however there were areas identified for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the expectations should be more specific and lead to interesting ways to approach the subject material</li> <li>▪ more variety is needed to make this strand more attractive to students</li> </ul> <p>Identified strengths of the Motor Development strand expectations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ students enjoy the skill acquisition and “coaching” aspects of this strand</li> <li>▪ The expectations allow for a broad range of teaching/assessment strategies</li> </ul>

## Recreation and Fitness Leadership – Grade 12 (PLF4C)

### Key Messages: Overall Course

#### 1. 90% of respondents wanted the course designation changed from a college destination course to a university/college destination course

It was felt that many of the skills addressed are important for all students (university bound and workplace bound), but since this course is listed as a "C" course, university-bound students do not make room in their timetable for this course and it is used by senior students as a "timetable filler", rather than approaching the course with an intent to learn and participate.

#### 2. Most respondents (91%) are able to address 76% - 99%, or 100% the curriculum expectations in their instruction of Recreation and Fitness Leadership.

The most commonly stated reasons for not addressing the remainder of these expectations were:

a. "too many expectations"

Comments included the fact that there is not enough time to complete expectations well, and that there are too many expectations within each strand. Some respondents stated that to keep the course practical and applied some of the specific expectations should be left out otherwise it becomes "a theory course" and does not allow for the application of theory in a practical setting which was felt to be critical for college level students.

b. the "unique requirements of student population":

In this case the comment indicated that students tend to be non-academic and expectations are too difficult.

## Recreation and Fitness Leadership - Key Messages: Findings Regarding Specific Strands

The overall and specific expectations in the secondary Recreation and Fitness Leadership curriculum are organized into three distinct but related strands. In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate which one of the three strands required the most revision. Most respondents (58%) indicated that Leadership required the most revision followed by Physical Fitness and Well-Being (30%) and then Facilitation of Recreation and Leisure (12%).

Leadership	Physical Fitness & Well-Being	Facilitation of Recreation & Leisure
<p>58% of respondents indicated that this strand required revisions as there are "too many expectations to cover". Some respondents also indicated that several expectations were not relevant for students in this course.</p> <p>The following expectations were listed as "not relevant" because the students are less interested in the background theory than the practical application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Explain the development of the concept of leadership from a historical perspective"</li> <li>▪ "Identify Canadian leaders in physical activities and describe their leadership qualities"</li> <li>▪ "Describe factors that affect group development"</li> <li>▪ "Explain theories relating to stages of group development."</li> </ul> <p>An identified strength of the Leadership Strand included that expectations were current, allowing students to take the skills and information learned and apply it to their lives.</p>	<p>30% of respondents indicated that this strand needed revision as there were "too many expectations to cover" and there were "gaps in the knowledge and skills".</p> <p>Some respondents also indicated that several expectations are not appropriate or are not relevant in this course, and the following examples were noted in this regard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "analyze the results of physical fitness appraisals"</li> <li>▪ "use appropriate appraisal tools to assess others' physical fitness"</li> <li>▪ "demonstrate an ability to support others in setting short – and long-term goals to maintain or improve their physical fitness"</li> <li>▪ "demonstrate an ability to support others in following personal fitness plans"</li> <li>▪ "use appropriate appraisal tools to assess the eating habits and patterns of others"</li> </ul> <p>It was stated that there should be an expectation that directs the promotion of health-related fitness with others rather than only focusing on fitness appraisals.</p> <p>In addition it was felt that the Nutrition section is a little too extensive and should focus on promoting nutrition and well-being rather than using appraisal tools.</p> <p>Identified strengths of the Physical Fitness and Well-Being Strand expectations indicated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the expectations are current; and</li> <li>• the strand is relevant in preparing students for a college destination pathway.</li> </ul>	<p>Only 12% of respondents indicated a need to revise the Facilitation of Recreation and Leisure strand, although several notable modifications were suggested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ minimize the focus on theory and further increase the practical aspects of the course - the strength of this course is the practical experience that is currently included in the curriculum</li> <li>▪ many of the expectations are too theoretical and would be better in a course at college. The 3 specific expectations under "Needs Assessment" do not work well in a high school H&amp;PE setting.</li> <li>▪ the specific expectations under Promotion of Participation are also not relevant to a high school setting in a course that should have students "doing" (e.g., planning events at a variety of levels - elementary classes, HPE classes, intramural at high school level) not always just learning theory,</li> <li>▪ students need a variety of opportunities and stating this in the curriculum document would validate the concept of practice and then assess</li> </ul> <p>An identified strength of this strand was that the Plan Coordination aspect was an important vehicle to develop leadership skills and teamwork skills in a practical setting. Students are exposed to excellent learning opportunities through the running of events and a high school setting provides a variety of venues for students to organize activities The "hands on" participation in this course is a great preparation for college courses.</p>

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## Consideration of Relevant Research and Literature – Summary and Conclusion

Effectively delivering a quality program that reaches a broad range of students at the secondary level is a notable challenge.

Research indicates that curriculum-based physical education classes in Ontario were offered in grade nine in all schools and classes in grades 10, 11 and 12 were offered in almost all schools. However, student enrollment decreased from grades 9 to 12 (97.9%, 49.6%, 43.3% and 35.9%, respectively). Respondents reported that funding, timetable, facilities and resources made it some-what difficult to implement the Health and Physical Education curriculum in their schools. Although provision of physical activity opportunities in Ontario appears satisfactory, actual engagement by students is low. The results suggest that strategies to increase student participation in Physical Education, needs further consideration.<sup>1</sup>

Considering that educational reviews reveal international evidence that espouses the following benefits of physical activity and health and physical education<sup>2</sup>:

- physical health
- cognitive and academic development
- mental health
- crime reduction
- reduction of truancy and disaffection

It seems necessary to take a closer look at how we can increase opportunities for physical education amongst secondary level students in Ontario. The Health and Physical Education Curriculum review should not only look at the course offering but the access and opportunity that exists to participate in those courses and in school-based physical activity at the secondary level.

OASPHE and Ophea are committed to working together with the Ministry, school boards and all relevant parties to ensure that the review and revisions of the Health and Physical Education Curriculum result in positive directions for students, educators and school communities.

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1 Adlaf, Edward., Allison, Kenneth., Dwyer, John., Faulkner, Guy., Goodman, Jack., LeMoine, Karen., & Lysy, Daria. (2006). A Provincial Study of Opportunities for School-based Physical Activity in Secondary Schools. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 39 (2006) 80 – 86.

2 Bailey, Richard. (2005). Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion. *Educational Review*, 57, 71-90.