



FOCUS ON HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Helping Students Learn, Grow and Succeed



Welcome to Our First E-Bulletin!

The Healthy Schools and Student Well-being Unit at the Ministry of Education developed this e-bulletin to update you on healthy schools policies and programs, along with key student health and well-being initiatives. In it, we will also share examples of promising healthy schools projects underway across Ontario.

Focus on Healthy Schools is part of the Healthy Schools and Student Well-being Support and Monitoring Plan that the ministry launched in September 2012. The plan aims to support school boards in implementing healthy schools policies and programs.

In addition to providing e-updates, the plan also includes ministry staff visits to select school boards and Adobe Connect sessions on key school health topics.

We welcome your input and feedback for future editions. See page 4 for how to submit your ideas, stories or other suggestions via email.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to making schools healthier places for students to learn!

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Make Physical Activity Your New Year's Resolution

Physical activity is an essential part of every elementary school student's day. The *Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines* recommend at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day for children and youth.

Making physical activity a positive experience at an early age helps lay the foundation for healthy, productive lives.



Some of the benefits of taking part in regular physical activity are:

- improved [academic performance](#): physical activity helps enhance concentration and attention as well as improve classroom behaviour;
- [healthy growth and development](#): physical activity helps to develop cardiovascular fitness, strength and bone density;
- [improved long-term health, well-being and quality of life](#): physical activity helps to prevent chronic diseases such as cancer, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease later in life; and
- [positive mental health](#): physical activity promotes self-esteem, which may protect children against mental health issues.

School boards can play a key role in helping children and youth get the physical activity they need. Elementary schools can help their



students by ensuring that they get at least 20 minutes a day of moderate to vigorous physical activity during instructional time, as the Health and Physical Education curriculum requires.

School Board Strategies

Daily physical activity (DPA) requires a strong commitment and ongoing support from the school board. School boards can help make DPA a reality by:

- identifying a school board leader to champion DPA. This person can help coordinate implementation across the school board; provide ongoing support to principals and teachers; develop training; share promising practices; and track implementation;
- using the [Foundations for a Healthy School](#) framework to undertake a comprehensive school board approach to physical activity in schools; and
- identifying community partners who can help support implementation of DPA, e.g., public health unit, local recreation providers, provincial or multi-sport organizations.

Consult the ministry's [resource guides and online modules](#) for practical tips and videos to support DPA.

Supporting Safety in Technological Education and Science Labs



In 2011-12, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) inspected elementary (Grades 7 and 8) and secondary school technological education facilities and science labs to determine whether schools were complying with the minimum requirements of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations. For example, inspections focused on chemical storage, housekeeping, equipment maintenance and safe operation. In January 2013, results of MOL's inspection blitz were published [on their website](#).

These inspections helped to raise awareness about occupational health and safety requirements and to promote positive changes in the safety culture of schools. The inspection blitz also highlighted the

need for all school boards to make student injury prevention and personal safety a priority.

To help support injury prevention in school technological education facilities and science labs, the Ministry of Education is providing over \$10 million in one-time funding to:

1. Support the Council of Ontario Directors of Education in establishing a Provincial health and safety team that will:
 - develop a set of provincial health and safety promising practices;
 - create a list of safety experts, available province-wide, to inspect technological education facilities and science labs; and
 - provide advisory and professional development support to schools, including training.
2. Help all school boards to improve health and safety in technological education facilities and science labs, based on local need; and
3. Support provincial subject associations to produce additional resources that promote health and safety in specific areas (Science Teachers' Association of Ontario, Science Coordinators and Consultants Association of Ontario, Ontario Council for Technology Education).

Did you know...

The Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines (OSG) are now available free-of-charge and without password protection to all school board staff, principals, teachers, coaches, volunteers and parents across Ontario.

Produced by the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (Ophea), the OSG are a valuable resource when organizing or assisting with school-based physical activities.

The Guidelines are divided into three modules for both elementary and secondary schools: Curricular Programs, Intramural Clubs and Activities, and Interscholar Athletics.

To access the OSG, please visit Ophea's [website](#) or contact safety@ophea.net.

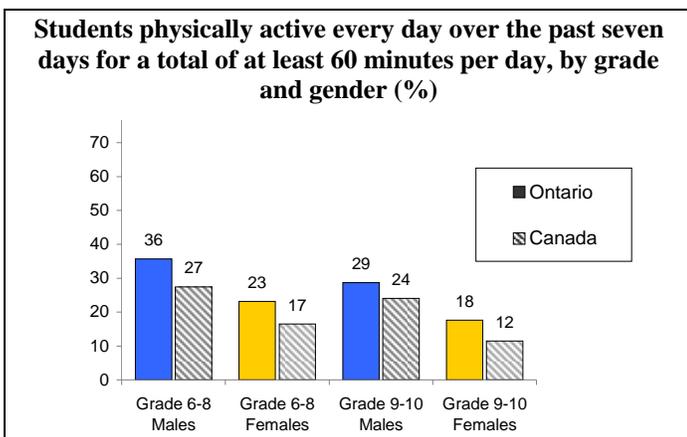
More detailed funding information is being sent to all boards.

Health and Health-related Behaviours Among Young People: Ontario *now Online*

Did you know that Ontario students (aged 11-15) are more likely to engage in an hour of daily physical activity, smoke less, experience fewer behavioural problems, and are more trusting than students in the rest of Canada? Ontario's Grades 6-8 students are also less likely to be sedentary or eat fast foods and more likely to consume fruits and vegetables than their Canadian peers.

These and other findings are now available in the *Health and Health-related Behaviours Among Young People: Ontario* (HBSC) on the Ministry of Education's [website](#). This is the first time that provincial/territorial data have been made available.

HBSC is a school-based, self-reported survey that captures health-related data from youth aged 11-15. The survey takes place every four years, most recently in 2009-10, in 43 countries and regions from North America and Europe.



The study offers insight into, knowledge and understanding of adolescent health in its social and developmental context. It includes measures of physical, emotional and social health and well-being. HBSC also looks at a wide range of health risk behaviours and behaviours that promote positive health.

Knowledge about students' attitudes, behaviours, physical and psychological well-being and the factors that influence them is essential in developing effective health education and school

health promotion policies, programs and practice. This report is a useful tool that can help support implementation of healthy schools and student well-being initiatives.

Coming Soon: Additional School Food and Beverage Policy Resources

Since releasing the School Food and Beverage Policy, the Ministry of Education has provided schools with print and online resources to help them implement the policy.



Most recently, the ministry released [online student tools for elementary teachers](#) that include lessons for students in Grades 1-8. The lessons aim to help students learn about healthy eating and apply their knowledge through interactive activities.

In winter 2013, the ministry will give school boards copies of a Secondary Teacher Resource Guide for them to distribute to schools. The guide will also be posted on the ministry's website.

The guide provides an overview of the School Food and Beverage Policy; makes connections between the policy and curriculum; provides examples of effective practices in the classroom and school; and promotes health literacy for students. It will support continued implementation and help secondary school teachers integrate healthy eating into classroom teaching.

In Focus: "You Are Where You Eat" – Peel Public Health's School Cafeteria Campaign

The Ministry of Education knows how community partnerships can support healthy schools policies and programs – and we are always happy to report on collaborations that produce results!

One innovative practice emerging from a partnership between school boards and public health units is Peel Public Health Unit's social marketing campaign "You Are Where You Eat".

With promising early results, this campaign is the latest way that Peel Public Health is working with

the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB) and the Peel District School Board (PDSB) to implement the School Food and Beverage Policy. Previous efforts have included resource development, training, as well as staff, student and other stakeholder engagement.

“The implementation of the School Food and Beverage Policy has provided a tremendous opportunity for all stakeholders to focus on encouraging healthy choices. Students, staff and community partners have worked together to build learning and create change in a fun and engaging way.” - Ted Byers, School Support Officer, PDSB

Building on this collaborative approach, the current campaign is encouraging secondary students to use their cafeterias during lunch periods by improving the eating environment.

For the campaign, Peel Public Health hired a marketing company to assess how best to market “healthy eating” to secondary school students. After running focus groups, online chat-rooms, and video diaries, the company found that youth aged 14-18 want healthy eating experiences that include opportunities for socializing as a top priority. This is followed by considerations of cost, independence, taste and convenience.

Based on these results, the following tactics were developed:

Toolkit with posters and games:

Peel Public Health trained teacher leaders and/or students from each secondary school on the toolkit’s contents and on new games to be played in cafeterias. Schools could submit proposed action plans to public health to receive gift certificates for use as prizes.

In some cases, students from the food and nutrition class or the student council led the cafeteria games. Using the toolkit as a springboard, some schools have also hosted other nutrition-related activities.



Facebook contest: The public health unit developed content for a “You Are Where You Eat” Facebook page. Students that “like” the page are eligible to win a \$250 SportChek gift card. Currently, there are over 2,600 “likes” on this page, creating an audience that could be used for future messaging and knowledge exchange.

On this main Facebook page, students can also “like” their school’s School Food and Beverage Policy page for a chance to win a MuchMusic video dance party. With some schools reaching participation rates of nearly 70%, the public health unit feels that a potential future component to Facebook will be for each school to use their page for school-specific messages (e.g., contests, menu specials).

While ongoing evaluations will determine the next steps for the campaign, students from both school boards are already benefitting. Initial feedback suggests that students feel the campaign materials have made their cafeterias more attractive, and some teachers have noticed more students staying in the cafeterias over lunch.

“What I really like about this campaign is the student engagement...student voice. It has really created capacity for students to be involved. The creativity of the students is building the campaign’s momentum through fun and exciting activities for their peers.”

– Joanna Boudreau, Principal, Student Success-Learning to 18 Secondary Program, DPCDSB

For more information...

Peel Public Health is willing to share its learning and campaign resources with other boards and schools.

For more information, please contact Cheryl Meaden at 905-791-7800, ext. 2195 or cheryl.meaden@peelregion.ca

Do you have a story to share?

We always want to hear about promising practices – whether it’s school-based or a board-wide project, a partner-led campaign, or another innovative approach.

If you have an idea for a future *Focus on Healthy Schools*, please email healthy.schools@ontario.ca