

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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Ontario has a comprehensive health and physical education curriculum which is designed to help students in grades 1 through 8 develop:

- an understanding of the importance of physical fitness, health, and well-being, and the factors that contribute to them;
- a personal commitment to daily vigorous physical activity and positive health behaviours;
- the basic movement skills they require to participate in physical activities throughout their lives.<sup>1</sup>

*"We have an award-winning phys ed program with an extensive sports and intramural program."*

A school in  
Toronto DSB

The amount of time that students must spend in Health and Physical Education classes each week is not spelled out.

Despite the fact that physical education is a mandatory subjects in the elementary curriculum, there is presently no funding specifically designated in the education funding formula for specialist physical education teachers.

In May 2005, the province's elementary teachers reached an agreement with the Ministry of Education that will result in increased funding for preparation time over the next four years. In order to increase teachers' preparation time, the province must provide funding for more teachers, which will result in some new specialist teachers in music, phys ed, and literacy and numeracy.

### ***Daily Physical Activity***

The Minister of Education plans to increase children's minimum physical activity to 20 minutes a day or 100 minutes a week by fall 2005. This year, for the first time, we asked schools to tell us how many minutes per week on average their students receive physical education within class time, not including recess or lunch hour.

Our 2004/05 survey shows:

- students received an average of 109 minutes per week of physical education; and
- the average amount of time per school that students spent receiving

physical education in class time ranged from 30 to 272 minutes per week.

**Teachers Make a Difference**

While the plan to increase children’s minimum daily physical activity is commendable, what may be as important as the number of minutes of activity, is the nature of the instruction students receive. Research shows that students of trained physical education teachers are more likely to be very active than students taught by teachers without special training.

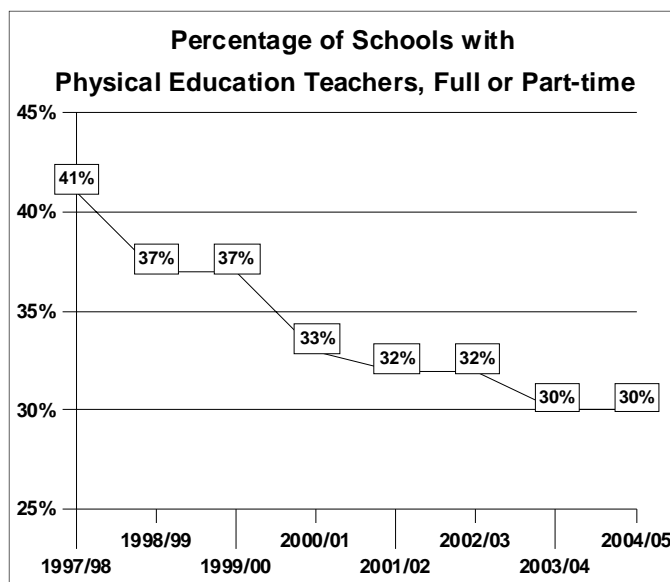
*“We would like extra gym space to allow for the extra physical activity the Ministry of Education would like to see.”*

A school in  
Near North DSB

Our 2004/05 survey shows that in schools that reported having full- or part-time physical education teachers, students were more likely to receive 100 minutes or more of physical education per week, during class time.

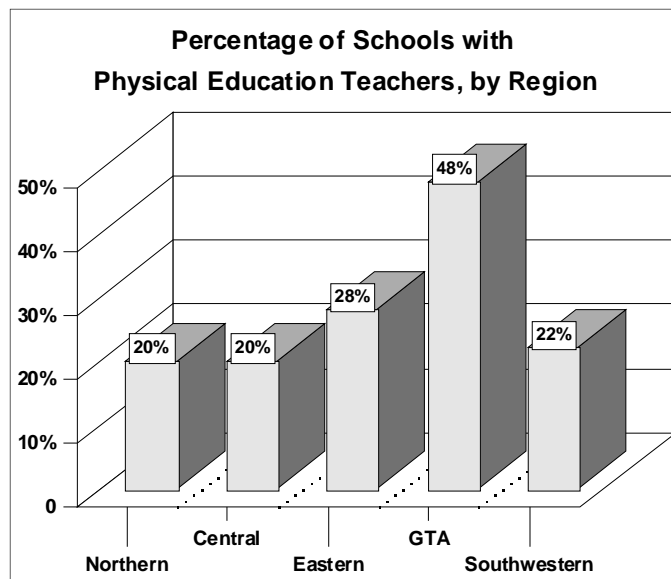
In our 2004/05 survey:

- in schools with full- or part-time physical education teachers, 65% provided 100 minutes or more of physical education per week, compared to 55% of schools with no physical education teachers;
- 30% of schools reported having a physical education teacher, either full- or part-time, a result that reflects a gradual decline from 41% in 1997/98; and
- 18% of schools reported having a full-time physical education teacher, a result that has fluctuated between 14% and 19% since 1997/98.



**Regional Differences**

*“Our school has an active athletics program and a rich music program.”*  
 A school in  
 Greater Essex County  
 DSB



**Physical Education and its Impact**

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, half of Canadians aged 5 to 17 are not active enough for optimal growth and development.<sup>2</sup> Schools can play a key part in battling childhood inactivity.

In September 2005, Alberta will require 30 minutes of Daily Physical Activity for all students in grades 1 through 9. But physical activity is not the same as physical education taught by a specialist teacher.

One American study comparing programs taught by physical education specialists to those taught by classroom teachers who had not received special training in physical education, showed trained teachers provided more and better quality instruction, spending over three times more class time on instruction in fitness activities. Students of trained teachers were twice as likely to be very active.<sup>3</sup>

**Recommendation**

People for Education recommends the implementation of education policy that provides funding for specialist physical education teachers in elementary schools.

## Endnotes

1. Ministry of Education, *Health and Physical Education, The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8* (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1998). <<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/health/health.html#curriculum>>
2. Public Health Agency of Canada, *Canadian Physical Activity Levels for Children and Youth*. <[http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/child\\_youth/children/activityStats.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/child_youth/children/activityStats.html)>
3. T.L. McKenzie, J.F. Sallis, N. Faucette, J. Roby, and B. Koldy, "Effects of a curriculum and in-service program on the quality and quantity of elementary physical education classes," *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 64 (1993): 178-87. <<http://www.coahperd.org/resources/position/elepe.html>>