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WORKSHOP NOTES: Food, Sex and Health - P4e Conference Nov. 13/10

The recent controversies surrounding the new sex ed curriculum and how to make choices about what foods should be available in schools have re-ignited the age-old debate about who is best suited to teach children values. If schools are to teach values, who should set the rules? This workshop will examine the current rules and some of the innovative programs that are taking place in Ontario schools.

Panel: Chris Markham (Executive Director and CEO, [Ophea](#)) and Paul Finkelstein (AMDSB, Celebrity Chef, Food Network and winner of the Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence)

Chris Markham:

- One of the current roles for [Ophea](#) is primarily to support the implementation of the new HPE curriculum - physical and health literacy in order to live a healthy lifestyle.
- Things are not 'all right' with our students: cyber-bullying, obesity, sexual health, etc.
- Shared responsibility between schools (education system), community, parents, etc.
- Controversy about curriculum: originally supported the curriculum released in January 2010. In April, the Premier pulled the curriculum because of some comments from a very few people. Media played a huge role in this. This curriculum deals with sensitive issues.

Paul Finkelstein:

- Became a celebrity chef by connecting students with good and real food.
- We provide students with ample opportunities to buy fast/fried food in cafeteria and community.
- In many schools, the school receives a kickback from the vending machines. A different way of fundraising. EDU set up guidelines as to what schools could sell.
- New policy is a good start but doesn't stop junk food from being served. Smaller serving sizes helps but kids can still eat more by buying more. Step in the right direction.

Issues arising throughout the discussion:

- Not called 'sex ed'. It is 'human development and sexual health'. It is designed as a continuum – need building blocks and facts beginning in grade 1 with correct anatomical terminology to prepare students for later discussions
- Discussions at school provide the opportunity to continue the discussion at home. High school students desperately need this info. They are very sexual beings.
- Concepts such as healthy relationships are very important in the development of many life skills.
- Food can be used as a cultural tool. Need to encourage parents to come into the school to teach all of us about cooking in different cultures.
- We should provide our kids with the knowledge to understand appropriate vs inappropriate through role modeling. How can we expect them to be responsible citizens if we, as adults, don't model that – eg, pulling of the curriculum.
- Need much more collaboration and teamwork. Too many of today's kids are "it's all about me"
- Mention of a book: **Boys, Girls and Body Science** (Meg Hickling).
- Food programs are growing all over the province. Students want to play with food. They don't do it at home. Elementary teachers are the ones who will change how kids think about food.

- When a young child asks about having two moms or dads, this is an important ‘teaching moment’: it is the conversation starter. Teacher prompts are helpful. We can’t ignore the different family situations. Many design shows show the diversity in our society.
- Old curriculum was 40 pages – new curriculum is 200. Parents and teachers need to know how to deal with these questions.
- Dealing with healthy food choices in elementary without the facilities-portable equipment and more cross-panel (elementary to secondary) interchanges would be helpful
- New legislation about food in schools is a good start-change cannot happen overnight ([see below for more resources](#))
- Targeting food services organizations first. Need to go much further and educate children about food at an earlier age; eg organic vs junk food, pre-fab vs whole foods.
- With the diversity in Ontario, we should be encouraging ethnic foods everywhere.
- Should also be offering more food programs in schools, especially at elementary level.
- Teachers are not all aware of new curriculum when it is released. In the HPE case, the media made everyone aware of the issue. Now, the secondary curriculum for HPE and Social Sciences/Humanities has been held back. Unsure of the reasons.
- What is taught in school is not necessarily sensationalized. If in a non-threatening environment, teaching facts is a good thing. Knowledge is power. Kids need to know that differences are okay.
- In 2010, this curriculum must be taught. Our goal is to advocate for what is right. This must be addressed before the next election.
- Teenage pregnancy. If we focus more on healthy relationships, and less on safe sex, would this help?
- Who is teaching our kids that gays are bad?
- Any opportunity to highlight that differences are okay, no matter what the differences are should be capitalized. Respect them for who they are.
- One of the things that came out of the HPE being pulled is what was in the old curriculum. Sometimes, telling parents what is being taught is the easiest way to deal with these things.
- Still have areas of the curriculum that are overemphasized – literacy and numeracy; hence some of the other info is never even looked at.

FREE RESOURCES:

A new amazing website: <http://eatrightontario.ca/> [there is also a cool contest for kids]

View our short Parent Friendly Presentations!



Understanding the the New Food and Beverage Policy for schools *PPM #150*:

[Watch and listen to a 12 minute Power Point presentation](#) hosted by People for Education, presented by Public Health Nutritionist Lucy Valteau. (Free on the internet with audio, just click the arrow to play). *This free presentation can be used for PD at schools or as a workshop for parents.*



Understanding the NEW *interim* Elementary Physical and Health Education Curriculum – a parent friendly perspective

[Watch and listen to a 15 minute Power Point presentation](#) hosted by People for Education, presented by Jennifer Cowie Bonne of OPHEA. (Free on the internet with audio, just click the arrow to play). *This free presentation can be used for PD at schools or as a workshop for parents.*