

Key Messages:

February 23, 2015

Release of the revised curriculum for Health and Physical Education, Grades 1 to 12

General:

- Ontario's curriculum is recognized as world class and sets high standards of achievement for all students and supports the government's goals of achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being and enhancing public confidence.
- Well-being is a core component of Ontario's renewed vision for education. Ontario is committed to the success, safety and well-being of every student and child – that's why it's important that Ontario's curriculum is current, relevant and age-appropriate to support students in having the best information possible to make informed decisions about their health and well-being.
- The mandatory learning expectations in the curriculum identify what students should know and be able to do at the end of the grade or course in a specific subject.
- The optional examples, prompts and student responses illustrate the possible breadth and depth of the learning and are provided to assist teachers in program and lesson planning and to prepare teachers for the sort of dialogue or questions that might arise. They are not a comprehensive or required list or script.
- In drafting this curriculum, the government consulted with experts, parents, students, teachers, faculties of education, universities, colleges and numerous stakeholder groups including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), the Ontario Public Health Association and the Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition.
- Focus groups were held with educators and school board officials, and face-to-face sessions with parents and students. Subject matter experts reviewed the technical content of the curriculum. More than 70 health-related organizations submitted reports for consideration, and parents from the province's 4000 elementary schools were invited to provide their input.
- The revised curriculum contains new material related to important issues – healthy relationships, consent, mental health, online safety and the risks of sexting – and is more inclusive of Ontario's diverse population.
- The revised curriculum promotes the healthy development – physical, social, emotional, and cognitive -- of all students, and builds the skills and knowledge to lead and promote healthy, active lives now and in the future.

- The curriculum recognizes that Living Skills, also related to some 21st century skills, such as problem-solving, critical and creative thinking, communication, self-awareness and adaptive skills, resilience, collaboration, and coping skills must be developed and practiced from a young age and applied in increasingly complex situations as one gets older.
- The revised curriculum supports and aligns with ministry and government policies and initiatives including the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, the Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, the Comprehensive Action Plan for Accepting Schools, Healthy Schools policies and programs, the First Nation, Metis and Inuit Education Policy Framework.
- In Ontario the mandatory curriculum is the same in all 4 publicly funded systems – French Catholic, French Public, English Catholic and English Public. Implementation of the curriculum is the responsibility of teachers guided by school and board policies and procedures. In Catholic schools the curriculum is implemented in a Catholic context. We will continue to work closely with the Institute for Catholic Education and other Catholic education partners in order to ensure that teachers have resources that will support them to deliver the updated curriculum in the context of Catholic values.

Parents:

- Parents from all four education systems – English public, English Catholic, French public and French Catholic – indicated that they want their children to learn about the safe use of social media, they value communication between the home and the school about what their children are learning in any subject, and they would like access to resources developed specifically for parents about various topics in the curriculum to support their discussions at home.
- The Parent Guides and first 2 Quick Facts documents respond to this request from parents for resources. It is anticipated that additional resources will be developed and released in the coming months.
- Schools and parents play critical and complementary roles in supporting all student learning, including learning about human development and sexual health.
- If a parent has concerns about classroom lessons or learning activities they should bring these to the attention of the teacher or the school principal so that a resolution can be determined on a case by case basis. The Ontario curriculum is based on research and extensive consultation and the implementation of the curriculum is mandatory in our publicly funded education system.

Specific Topics:

- The foundation for understanding consent is linked closely to skills for healthy relationships. Young children learn not only refusal skills and the skills to stand up for themselves, but they also learn to listen to others, show respect, and to take responsibility for not causing harm to others in age-appropriate settings such as in play or in the school yard. From an early age, the message that consent is a two-way street has been strengthened in the curriculum.
- It is important that all students see themselves reflected in the learning at school. Throughout the revised curriculum there are examples and prompts to encourage teachers to consider the diverse needs of the students in their classrooms, including reflecting students of all gender identities and sexual orientations.
- The curriculum is inclusive, addresses the education needs of all students, and reflects the diversity of the Ontario population. School staff and students must demonstrate respect for diversity in school and the wider society. Teachers are expected to implement the curriculum in such a way that all students are valued and included, and that the diversity of life experiences that students bring to the classroom are reflected.