



QUICK FACTS FOR PARENTS

Integrated Learning through Health and Physical Education

Health and Physical Education (HPE) provides students with important opportunities for additional learning about the environment, Indigenous peoples, equity and inclusiveness, and financial literacy.



LEARNING IN HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION... AND MORE

In Ontario, in addition to providing learning on specific subjects, all curricula provide opportunities to connect that learning to important topics in other subjects or courses and to life in general. In particular, the Ministry of Education requires all curricula to provide opportunities for learning related to the environment, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples, equity and inclusiveness, and financial literacy. These areas have been emphasized because they are important to the quality of life of Ontarians and to the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of our society.

The following sections explain how Health and Physical Education can be an effective gateway for learning about the environment, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples, equity and inclusiveness, and financial literacy. They also show how each is connected to what students are learning with the HPE curriculum.

HPE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Learning activities in HPE often take place outdoors, not only on the school grounds but on fields, trails, and in other natural spaces nearby. Learning to appreciate and respect the environment is an integral part of being active in these spaces. Students also learn how healthy practices such as walking, or biking, can have environmental benefits, how food choices can have environmental implications, and how environmental hazards such as excessive sun exposure and air pollution can affect their health. Students of all ages are encouraged to consider the local and global impacts of their choices with respect to the environment.

HPE AND EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The Health and Physical Education curriculum provides a range of opportunities for students to learn about equity and inclusiveness. Students learn how physical activities can be adapted so that students of all abilities and needs can participate in a variety of games, sports, and other activities that reflect the cultural diversity of their schools.

As students move through the grades, they learn about what makes individuals unique, including those aspects that can be seen and those that are “invisible.” They also learn about stereotyping and how to prevent and respond to it, and about showing respect for everyone. Examples and prompts in the curriculum help teachers think about and plan for the wide range of learning needs that they may encounter in their classrooms – for example, students with physical disabilities such as congenital heart disease or vision impairment, students with special cognitive needs, and students from a variety of cultural and faith backgrounds and family structures.

Research shows that this approach to learning is highly successful. Students come away with a much better understanding of a topic when they learn about it in a variety of ways from a variety of sources that are integrated with other subjects or courses. Presenting learning in a variety of contexts helps make it more meaningful.

Health and Physical Education plays an important role in creating a school environment in which diversity is valued and all members of the school community feel safe, included, and accepted.

HPE AND FIRST NATION, MÉTIS, AND INUIT EDUCATION

The Ontario government believes that all students are enriched by learning about the histories, cultures, and perspectives of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Canada. In the Health and Physical Education program, students can expand their understanding of Indigenous cultures through playing traditional games and learning about Indigenous ways of knowing as they apply to personal growth and well-being. Learning about stress management and mental health, for example, can be enriched by learning about Indigenous concepts and practices, such as the seven grandfathers teachings, the medicine wheel, and the sacred use of tobacco. The curriculum offers many opportunities to make learning culturally relevant and to make connections with local community resources and supports that are sensitive to the needs of all students.

HPE AND FINANCIAL LITERACY EDUCATION

The HPE curriculum provides a variety of options for exploring financial issues in connection with health topics and developing skills that can help with personal financial management. For example, students can consider how affordability affects diet, exercise and lifestyle, e.g., whether people can afford to eat healthy food or get involved in physical activities. They may also examine issues such as the economic costs associated with substance use or the ways in which physical activity and sports affect and are affected by the economy. As they consider choices that affect their health and well-being, students develop consumer awareness and acquire budgeting, goal setting, time-management, and critical thinking skills that will help them make sound and informed financial decisions throughout their lives.

MORE INFORMATION

- » Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow, A Policy Framework for Environmental Education in Ontario Schools www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/enviroed/ShapeTomorrow.pdf
- » Realizing the Promise of Diversity – Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf
- » Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/fnmiFramework.pdf
- » Financial Literacy Education in Ontario Schools www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/financial.html
- » The Ontario Curriculum, Health and Physical Education, Grades 1-8, (2015) www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/health.html
- » The Ontario Curriculum, Health and Physical Education, Grades 9-12, (2015) www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/health.html

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILDREN’S LEARNING

How to support younger children

- Teach your children to dress and prepare appropriately for different kinds of weather (e.g., applying sunscreen, taking water with them so that they can stay hydrated) when they are active outdoors. Be a role model and follow these practices yourself.
- Encourage inclusiveness and respect for others through your own behaviour and through family discussions of current events related to diversity and inclusion (e.g., Ontario welcoming refugees and other newcomers).
- Read books about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, lives and stories and discuss them together.
- Talk about financial decisions as a family so that children develop a sense of what things cost and how these costs affect financial decisions.

How to support older children

- Talk about ways of reducing the family’s environmental footprint by walking, reducing consumption, and reusing and recycling.
- Explore and try foods from a variety of cultures. Add to the fun by shopping for these foods and preparing them together as a family.
- Take the opportunity to learn together about people and their diverse cultures, backgrounds, and experiences (e.g., by attending a Pow Wow or other cultural event, visiting museums or other institutions that share information about a range of cultures, watching films together that are set in diverse countries or neighbourhoods or that feature diverse family structures).
- Give youth an opportunity to practise budgeting, saving, and spending and provide them with guidance and support as they make financial decisions.