

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Principals of Elementary Schools

**FROM:** Ben Levin  
Deputy Minister

**DATE:** October 6, 2005

**RE:** *Daily Physical Activity in Elementary Schools, Grades 1-8 – Policy/Program Memorandum 138*

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The government believes in the importance of making schools healthier places for students to learn. Helping young people lead healthy, active lives is a shared responsibility in which schools play a critical role. Research shows that daily physical activity can improve students' behaviour, self-esteem, readiness to learn, and achievement.

Building on an overall plan to assist in the development of healthier lifestyle habits in our children and youth, I am pleased to provide you with the Ministry of Education's new Policy/Program Memorandum (P/PM) on *Daily Physical Activity in Elementary Schools, Grades 1-8*. The P/PM states that boards must ensure that all elementary students from Grades 1 to 8, including students with special needs, have a minimum of twenty minutes of sustained moderate to vigorous physical activity each school day during instructional time. For your information, the P/PM is also posted on the Ministry's web site <[www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca)>.

Although the P/PM is only applicable to elementary students from Grades 1 to 8, school boards and principals should also ensure opportunities are provided for Kindergarten students to be physically active each day. The Kindergarten program will be revised soon to include information on daily physical activities.

While we recognize that there will be differences in approaches and implementation, we do expect that all elementary schools will start to make their best efforts to ensure that students are receiving at least twenty minutes of sustained moderate to vigorous daily physical activity during instructional time as soon as possible, with all schools reaching this objective by the end of the 2005-06 school year.

Further information on reporting and accountability regarding daily physical activity will be provided by the Ministry later in the fall of 2005.

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It is important to note that while participation in physical activity is linked to *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: Health and Physical Education, 1998* (H&PE), it is only one component of a complete H&PE program. The electronic versions of the H&PE curriculum have been updated on the Ministry's web site to include the requirement of at least twenty minutes of sustained moderate to vigorous physical activity each day.

The Ministry recognizes that building capacity at the board and school level is an essential component of implementing daily physical activity. Consequently, the Ministry has assembled a group of key partners that includes school boards, principals, and teachers to provide input on the development of training resources to support implementation at the local level.

To begin with, the Ministry will be providing school boards, principals, and teachers with resource guides, tailored for each group, to assist in making daily physical activity a reality for all elementary students. The resource guides are being developed by the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (Ophea), a credible Ontario voice on the subject of physical activity, in collaboration with the Ministry and recognized physical activity experts from the education sector.

It is expected that the teacher and principal resource guides will be made available in October. Please note that three separate teacher guides are being developed that will include customized information and activities for specific grade categories – a guide for Grades 1-3, one for Grades 4-6, and one for Grades 7-8. A sample selection of the teacher guides can be found on the Ministry's web site. The board resource guides are expected to be made available in mid-November.

At the local level, it will be important for boards, principals, and teachers to begin discussions on methods of effective implementation of the daily physical activity requirement. For instance, boards and principals may wish to consider including discussions on daily physical activity within the framework of the school improvement planning process. As well, providing formal opportunities for teachers to discuss with their colleagues implementation within the classroom may also generate discussions on methods of integrating physical activity within other curriculum areas. Schools are encouraged to invite parents and community organizations to support the implementation of daily physical activity, as well as promote students' physical activity outside of the school day.

I would like to acknowledge the work already being done by boards and schools in providing daily physical activity to students. We want to build on those efforts to ensure that all elementary students are provided the opportunity to be physically active during the instructional school day for at least twenty minutes.

If you have any questions, please contact your District School Board or School Authority. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to making schools healthier environments for students.

Sincerely,



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Ben Levin

Attachment

c: Ministry of Education Regional Offices