

Physical Education in Canada

It is not easy to describe the delivery system of Physical Education in Canada due to the fact Education is a provincial government matter. As a result, there are ten provincial and three territorial Ministries (Departments) of Education. Each of the thirteen governments has the right to determine what is taught in schools under their jurisdiction. In addition, within each province, there can be more than one school system, e.g. Public School System (the largest in each province), Independent School System, and Parochial School System and numerous School Districts within each System. Although the provincial Ministries of Education have each developed provincial curriculum guides which include Goals, Objectives, Prescribed Learning Outcomes and other useful information, it is the responsibility of each school district to interpret the guide in developing Physical Education programs within their school district or jurisdiction. This paper will attempt to discuss the delivery of provincial Physical Education curricula in the public schools of Canada.

There are many outstanding curriculum guides in Canada. In fact, each province has a very well respected Physical Education curriculum guide. The development of modern, educationally sound curriculum guides started in the early 1980s with the issuing of the British Columbia Secondary Physical Education Curriculum and Resource Guide (1981), and has continued at a rapid rate throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The British Columbia document was a forerunner to many outstanding curriculum projects across Canada. Particular noteworthy during the 1980s, but by no means all-encompassing, were projects conducted by the Calgary Public School Board, Manitoba Ministry of Education, Calgary Separate School Board, Coquitlam School District, Vancouver School Board and the Ministry of Education in Quebec. Many of the documents created during the 1980s have been rewritten and/or are being rewritten at the present time. This paper will attempt to summarize the state of Physical Education curriculum development in Canada. A major source for this information was gathered through the use of the provincial Ministries of Education WebPages and an article published in the CAHPERD Journal entitled "Physical and Health Education Curriculum: Cross-Canada Perspectives" (Luke et al, 1990). This article includes sections written by active professionals in each of the provinces and territories in Canada.

Although there are many excellent Physical Education curricula in Canada, physical educators are still having a problem convincing Ministries of Education that Physical Education has an important role to play in the education system and in the health of the nation. There is a significant amount of support from the medical field for an increase in time allocation for Physical Education, but politicians have not followed their advice (See Table I).

Table I

Physical Education Requirements in Canada by Province

Province/Territories	Requirement	Comment
British Columbia	K – Grade 10	* One additional course may be taken at the Grade 11 & 12 level to meet graduation requirements
Alberta	K – Grade 10	
Saskatchewan	K – Grade 9	
Manitoba	K – Grade 10	* School districts may offer compulsory or optional Physical Education courses at the Grade 11 & 12 level
Ontario	K – Grade 8	* One Physical Education course is required in Grade 9 – 12 with an option to take one additional course for graduation
Quebec	All Grades	
New Brunswick	Grades 1 -10	* Students are required to complete at least one course from Fine Arts/Life Role development cluster in Grades 11 or 12 (Physical Education is within this cluster)
Nova Scotia	K – Grade 9 plus Grade 11	
Prince Edward Island	K – Grade 9	
Newfoundland	K – Grade 9	
Territories – North West, Nanavut and Yukon		* See Territories section

Although time allotments have remained somewhat constant during the past few years, many Physical Education budgets have been reduced. To counter this action, many schools have been very resourceful in raising money to continue their programs, but it is becoming much more difficult. Many of the new Physical Education curricula are stressing the development of an active living lifestyle and this includes using resources away from the school and the inherent added costs. If these initiatives are to continue additional funding is needed.

The area that has been hit the hardest is the availability of provincial consultants and school district consultants and/or curriculum coordinators within the various school

districts. These individuals played a very important role in the promotion of Physical Education and in the implementation of curriculum during the 1970 – 1990 time period. The services of these professionals were particularly useful in provinces such as British Columbia, where almost all Physical Education at the elementary school level (K7) is taught by generalist classroom teachers who have little or no training in the teaching of Physical Education. This predicament also exists in several other provinces. The lack of consultants/coordinators has been most noticeable when provincial curriculum committees have developed new curricula and an attempt made to implement the changes. In many cases, the curriculum sits on the shelf, and those generalist teachers need the assistance of Physical Education professionals in order to implement the changes. It is most unfortunate that many of the excellent provincial Physical Education curricula have not been implemented on a wide scale.

The following summary of Physical Education curricula in the various provinces and territories of Canada is provided as an overview. Readers are encouraged to visit the various www Websites in order to obtain more information about the specific Physical Education curriculum. Most Websites include copies of the full Physical Education curriculum for the province. It should be noted that no attempt will be made to cover the area of health education in this document, unless it is directly integrated into the Physical Education curriculum.

British Columbia (www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/irp.htm)

The Aim of Physical Education in British Columbia is “to enable all students to enhance their quality of life through active living”. To accomplish this task, the British Columbia Ministry of Education publishes three Physical Education curriculum documents, Physical Education K-7 (1995), Physical Education 8-10 (1995) and Physical Education 11& 12 (1998). Each document has been developed using three curriculum organizers. **Active Living** (student’s well being, functional fitness, personal goal setting and decision making), **Movement** (skills, movement concepts and mechanical principles), and **Personal and Social Responsibility** (interpersonal and communication skills). In addition, each document contains prescribed learning outcomes, instructional strategies, assessment strategies and recommended learning material for each grade level. The B.C. Ministry of Education’s “K-12 Education Plan” states that Physical Education programs within each school should be 10% of the available instructional time. Although this is specified by the Ministry of Education, many schools, particularly at the K-7 level, do not conform to this standard. Part of the problem lies with the fact that generalist teachers with little or no Physical Education background are expected to deliver the curriculum. It is not likely that this problem will be solved in the near future.

Alberta (www.learning.gov.ab.ca/physicaleducationline)

The Aim of the K-12 Physical Education program in Alberta is to enable individuals to develop the knowledge, skill and attitudes necessary to lead an active healthy lifestyle. Recently the Ministry of Education published a new curriculum, "Physical Education Kindergarten to Grade 12" (2000). It is expected that schools will start to implement this new curriculum during the 2000-2001 school year. The document is organized through the use of four General Outcomes (Skills in developmentally appropriate activities understand health benefits, interact positively with others and responsibility to lead an active way of life). To further assist teachers, specific learning outcomes have been developed for each grade level.

Saskatchewan (www.sasked.gov.sk/ca/evergreen/physed)

Curriculum guides in the province of Saskatchewan are organized by grade level, i.e. Grades 1-5 (Elementary Physical Education Curriculum, 1998), Grades 6-9 (Physical Education 6-9: A Curriculum Guide for the Middle School, 1995), Grades 10-12 (Instructional Physical Education 20 and 30: A Curriculum Guide for the Secondary Level, 1994). Although stated slightly different in each curriculum guide, the Aim of Physical Education in Saskatchewan is to develop through skill development and participation the positive attitudes that will lead to participation in an active lifestyle. Physical Education is a required subject for students in grades K-9, and it is expected that students will receive 150 minutes per week of Physical Education. There is an expectation that Physical Education will include various components from three integrated perspectives, i.e. Foundational Perspective (basic movement patterns and physical fitness), Activity Perspective (aquatics, developmental games and sports, educational gymnastics, fitness, outdoor pursuits and/or dance), Personal-Cultural Perspective (knowledge, understanding, appreciation and attitudes, social skills and cultural awareness).

Manitoba (www.edu.gov.mb.ca/metks4/curricul/k-s4curr/physhlth/index.html)

Manitoba has recently released a new curriculum framework of student learning outcomes for Physical Education. Although released during the 2000-2001 school year, it is not expected that teachers will fully implement the curriculum until the following dates Kindergarten – Grade 4 (2003-2006), Grades 5-8 (2004-2006) and Secondary (2005-2006). Physical Education is considered to be a "compulsory complementary" subject with the expectation that the instructional time allocated to Physical Education will be 11% in grades 1-6 and 9% in grades 7-8 of the total time available to students. In addition to being a required subject K-S, students at the secondary school level are also required to complete

two one unit Physical Education courses. The stated aim of Physical Education in Manitoba is “to provide students with planned and balanced programming to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes for physically active and healthy lifestyle” (p.3). In the new curriculum guides an attempt will be made to shift the emphasis from “physical fitness and exercise to an emphasis on physical well being.” (p.4). General student learning outcomes statements identifying knowledge, skills and attitudes that students are expected to demonstrate during their Physical Education classes have been developed to assist in organizing the curriculum i.e. Movement (skills), Fitness Management (planning), Safety (responsible behaviour), Personal and Social management (cooperation, relationships), and Healthy Lifestyle Practices (informed decisions).

Ontario (www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/curricul.html)

The guidelines for the teaching of Health and Physical Education in Ontario have undergone significant changes during past few years. During this time the Ministry of Education has published several documents to assist teachers in implementing Health and Physical Education. The Health and Physical Education Grades 1-8 (1998) document is organized around three major strands; Healthy Living (healthy eating, safety and substance abuse), Fundamental Movement Skills (locomotion/travelling, manipulation and stability), and Active Participation (physical activity, physical fitness, living skills, and safety). At the Grade 9 and 10 level, two documents; Healthy Active Living Education 9 and Healthy Active Living Education 10 provide guidance for teachers. These documents are organized using four distinct but related strands: Physical Activity (locomotion/travelling, manipulation and stability), Active Living (active participation, physical fitness and safety), Healthy Living (informed decisions related to growth, sexuality, mental health and safety), and Living Skills (conflict resolution, social skills, decision making). These courses emphasize regular participation in a variety of enjoyable physical activities that promote lifelong healthy active living.

Students taking Physical Education at the Grade 11 and 12 level have the opportunity to select the type of course they wish to take. A total of five courses are available i.e. Healthy Active Living Education Grade 11, Health for Life Grade 11, Healthy Active Living Education: Grade 12, Exercise Science: Grade 12 and Recreation and Fitness Leadership Grade 12. The exercise Science 12 course is designed for students planning to attend university programs in related fields while the Leadership course is designed for students planning to attend college programs in related fields.

Quebec (www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/GR-PUB/menu-curricu-a.htm)

Although the Ministry of Education had planned a major Physical Education curriculum change for September 2000, new documents were not available at the time of writing this paper. Hence, it is assumed that the elementary and secondary documents written during the 1980s are still in place. These documents stressed the need for teachers of Physical Education to adapt their instruction to the characteristics and developmental level of their students. It is stated that the content of Physical Education is concerned with and derived from the study of movement (bodily actions) linked to physical activities (the means used).

Like all other subject areas, Physical Education comes under the local scrutiny of the "Conseil d'établissement" (School Board) of each city in Quebec. Thus the Physical Education curriculum could be reduced or altered on their recommendation. It is extremely important for physical educators to "sell" Physical Education and its value to the public and local school boards or reductions may occur.

New Brunswick (www.gov.nb.ca/education)

Recently, the education system in New Brunswick has undergone an organizational shift in which schools are grouped as elementary (K-Grade 5), middle (Grade 6-8) and high school (Grades 9-12). This has necessitated the need to develop new Physical Education curriculum for each grouping. Only two of the five documents – Health and Physical Education 120 (1996) and Outdoor Pursuits 110 (1995) are not currently under revision. Both of these courses are classified as "selective-elective" and as such are available to students who are in Grades 11 or 12. At the middle school level, the general curriculum outcomes for Physical Education and health are organized around three strands: healthy life style planning, application of physical and perceptual skills and safety practices and procedures. As stated earlier, additional curriculum documents will be developed in the near future.

Nova Scotia (www.ednet.ns.ca/learning.html)

In an attempt to clarify for students, parents, teachers and administrators, the Physical Education curriculum outcomes outline what students in Nova Scotia are expected to know, to be able to do, and to value as a result of their learning experience in Physical Education. It is stressed that Physical Education is about movement and as such teachers and students must be cognizant of the dimensions of education: about movement (cognitive processes), through movement (affective contributions) and in movement (qualities of movement). The outcome framework provides the opportunity for teachers and students to monitor their progress and assess what students can and cannot do and what they know and what they need to know. The Physical Education curriculum has three organizing strands: knowing doing and valuing. Each strand has a series of general curriculum outcomes

followed by key-stage curriculum outcomes for each grade level. The three strands are interdependent and interrelated, and together they help form the curriculum.

Prince Edward Island (www2.gov.pe.ca/educ/)

There are three Physical Education curriculum guides available in Prince Edward Island: Elementary-Grades 1-6 (1989), Secondary-Grades 7-12 (1991) and a Physical Education Fitness Curriculum (1998). The majority of schools in P.E.I have Physical Education specialists teaching the prescribed program. The goals of Physical Education are: developing motor skills, knowledge and appreciation of physical activity and associated interpersonal relationship skills. A revision of the existing curriculum is expected in the near future.

Newfoundland and Labrador (www.gov.nf.ca.edu/)

Although the Department of Education did develop a “vision” document, A Physical Education Curriculum Framework: Adjusting the Course (1996), it does not appear that this document has resulted in a new provincial curriculum for Physical Education. In that the existing curriculum was developed in 1975, most teachers have developed their own programs and this has led to a considerable difference among schools and/or school districts. The development and playing of team games remains a dominating force in the delivery of Physical Education in Newfoundland. The proposed curriculum promotes a “personal-global” curriculum orientation framework that advocates “balance priorities between individual (personal) and global societal concerns and acknowledges the need for social change” (Jewett, 1994). The new framework supports CAHPERD’s QDPE program recommendations which advocates a Physical Education time allocation of a least 150 minutes per week for all students attending school.

Territories: North West, Nunavut and Yukon

In that distances are vast within and among the three territories, each has decided to use provincial curriculum guides provinces with whom they have the most conduct. Presently, it is common for the North West Territories to use the provincial guides from Alberta while the Yukon has more affiliation with British Columbia and hence uses the British Columbia curriculum. Nunavut has just recently achieved separate status as a Territory (April 1, 1999) and as a result they have been using curricula in place before separation. In most cases, teachers use the Alberta Physical Education Curriculum. The reliance upon existing provincial curriculum will no doubt change as population increases within each Territory and the need for more professional teachers becomes essential.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, it is difficult to accurately reflect the nature of Physical Education in Canada. However it is hoped that this short paper will create an interest in further exploring the diverse nature of Physical Education in Canada. The one major theme that becomes evident from this review is that physical educators in Canada are attempting to encourage students to develop an active healthy lifestyle by providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes. Readers are encouraged to visit the various Websites to obtain more information.

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**See Provincial Ministry of Education Websites for provincial curriculum guides.