

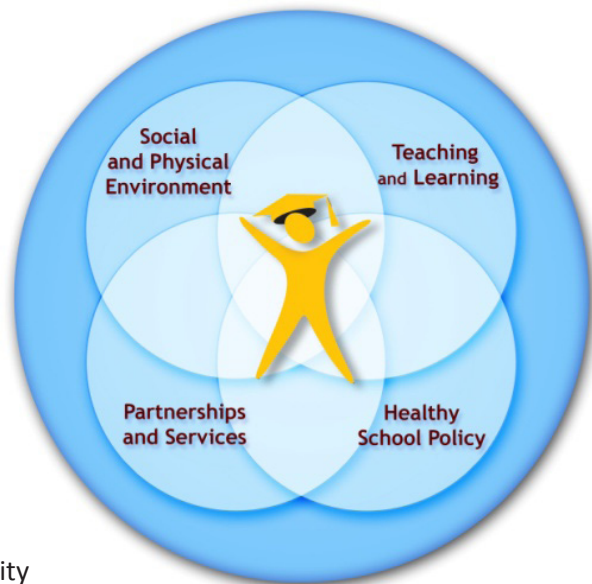
Physical Activity within a Comprehensive School Health Model

THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY'S ROLE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Comprehensive School Health is an internationally recognized framework for supporting improvements in students' educational outcomes while addressing school health in a planned, integrated and holistic way. It is not just about what happens in the classroom. Rather, it encompasses the whole school environment with actions addressing four distinct but inter-related pillars that provide a strong foundation for Comprehensive School Health:

- social and physical environment
- teaching and learning
- healthy school policy
- partnerships and services

In Comprehensive School Health's holistic approach, physical activity is broadly defined and includes not only physical education classes but also daily physical activity programs, intramural programs/clubs, interscholastic sports, walk-to-school programs, ride-your-bike-to-school programs, classroom walking programs and other programs or activities organized by schools or through community partnerships that get students and staff moving.



Physical activity: *any body movement of skeletal muscles (i.e., muscles that attach to bones) that uses energy.*

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School community members directly influence all four key areas of the approach. In order to elicit the most effective changes within the context of schools it is important for school community members to work together. School community members include:

- students
- families
- teachers
- school administrators
- school boards

Departments of education, school boards and school administrators have a significant impact on the levels and quality of physical activity students receive within the school environment. One of the most influential ways is through the creation and implementation of policies that support adequate/increased physical activity opportunities for all students. Such policies include:

- mandated physical education (i.e., 150 minutes per week)
- mandated daily physical activity time
- physical education credit requirements at the high school level
- appropriate and accessible physical activity facilities available within and outside of schools (e.g., gymnasiums, playgrounds)
- collaboration with community resources (e.g., arenas, pools)
- curriculum guidelines
- resources to support effective curriculum instruction
- ongoing training for teachers and other school staff involved in physical activity program delivery
- family and community involvement
- program evaluation

Students play an important role within their school community and can influence decisions related to physical activity that impact them. Having students take on leadership roles related to engagement in physical activity can positively impact the behaviour of other students within the schools.

Students, particularly senior students, can be powerful role models.

The attitudes and behaviours of parents/guardians directly influence children's behaviour. If parents are encouraged to be involved in educating their children about physical activity (e.g., through school newsletters, school physical activity fairs) they will not only increase the amount of physical activity their children participate in outside of school, they are more likely to become physically active themselves. Providing information to parents and ideas related to increasing physical activity through activities at home may be an effective mechanism for increasing the physical activity of children, youth and parents/guardians outside of school.

Parents are usually more receptive to activities that can be done at home than to those that require their attendance at the school on a consistent basis.

Teachers determine how effectively the curriculum is delivered, the level of knowledge that is instilled in students, as well as the array of opportunities provided for students to be physically active. Teachers are role models for students and so the more that they engage in and help their students engage in physical activity, the more likely students will become more active.

Teachers can play a critical role in involving parents/guardians in enhancing physical activity levels of students.

Departments of education, school boards and school administrators have a significant impact on the levels and quality of physical activity students receive within the school environment. In addition to ensuring that students are taught a quality physical education program, one of the most influential ways is through the creation and implementation of policies that support adequate/increased physical activity opportunities for all students. Examples of policies can be found in *Physical Activity within a Comprehensive School Health Model: School Policy Makers' Toolkit*.

School administrators are important role models for teachers, staff and students within the school environment.

The school environment can powerfully influence students' ability, attitudes, preferences and behaviours related to physical activity; in turn, physical activity programming will be most effective when school community members work together.