



Physical activity, movement, and sport opportunities and constraints in Ontario schools: a focus on girls

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Land Acknowledgment

Across the 46 Treaties and other agreements that cover the land we now call Ontario, we acknowledge the ancestral, unceded, and unsurrendered territory of all the Inuit, Métis, and First Nations people that call this land home. We also acknowledge the deep-rooted grief, trauma, and loss caused by Canada's colonial systems and policies.

As we take part in sport, movement, and physical activity across the 46 Treaties and other agreements, we recognize the caretakers of the land where we live, work and play. We thank the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit People for caring for these territories and who continue to contribute to caring for these lands and the strength across all communities in Ontario.

Introduction

The main objective of this report is to identify and describe physical activity, movement, and sport for girls in Ontario schools.

Physical activity, movement, and sport are valuable, empowering, and confer life-long benefits. School is a gateway to physical activity, movement, and sport, from informal play and movement at recess to more formal and structured health and physical education classes, and both intra- and inter-school sport. Children arguably have first experiences with physical activity, movement, and sport at school, where lifelong perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs are developed.

By early adolescence, youth start to drop out of sport and become more inactive overall. The trends in drop out and decreases in physical activity are much steeper and more dramatic for girls - with up to 50% no longer participating in sport (Canadian Women and Sport, 2022).

Adolescent girls are at least twice as likely to drop out of sport compared to boys (Fast and Female, 2020; Trussell, Kerwin, Lyn, & Lozinski, 2020); although other reports suggest girls might be up to six-times more likely to drop out of sport (Women's Sports Foundation, 2016).

Schools may offer opportunities for students to participate in sport, physical activity, and movement. Yet, little is understood about how these opportunities are presented, who is participating, and whether there are accessible opportunities for girls.

Physical activity, movement, and sport can have several benefits such as:

- reductions in mental illness symptoms of anxiety, distress, and despair;
- improvements in feelings of social support and connectedness;
- increases in confidence and self-esteem;
- enhancements to body image and self-esteem;
- promotion of greater leisure time physical activity;
- fostering academic success.

However, there are barriers that prohibit students from achieving these benefits including (i) cost, (ii) lack of quality experiences, (iii) competing interests and activities, and (iv) a lack of sense of belonging. Schools can help reduce these barriers to support more youth to be more active.

**Given the plethora of
benefits to physical
activity, movement,
and sport, it is
important to
thoroughly
understand the
school context as
fostering and
preventing
participation**

✨ especially for girls ✨

Data

Understanding the school context for youth physical activity, movement, and sport requires an integration of multiple types and sources of data and 2 separate integrated phases.



01. Phase 1

To address the question: “what does physical activity, movement, and sport look like (in particular for girls) in the Ontario school system?”



02. Phase 2

To address the question: “what are girls’ and education leaders’ beliefs and perceptions of physical activity, movement, and sport in Ontario schools?”

Phase 1

To address the question:

“what does physical activity, movement, and sport look like (in particular for girls) in the Ontario school system?”

REVIEW MATERIALS

- REVIEW of existing textual and graphic data drawn from websites, policies, curriculum documents, and reports presented within the 72 school boards and a representative sample of schools to identify:
 - how physical activity, movement, and sport is described;
 - how physical activity, movement, and sport is represented;
 - gender-specific opportunities for participation;

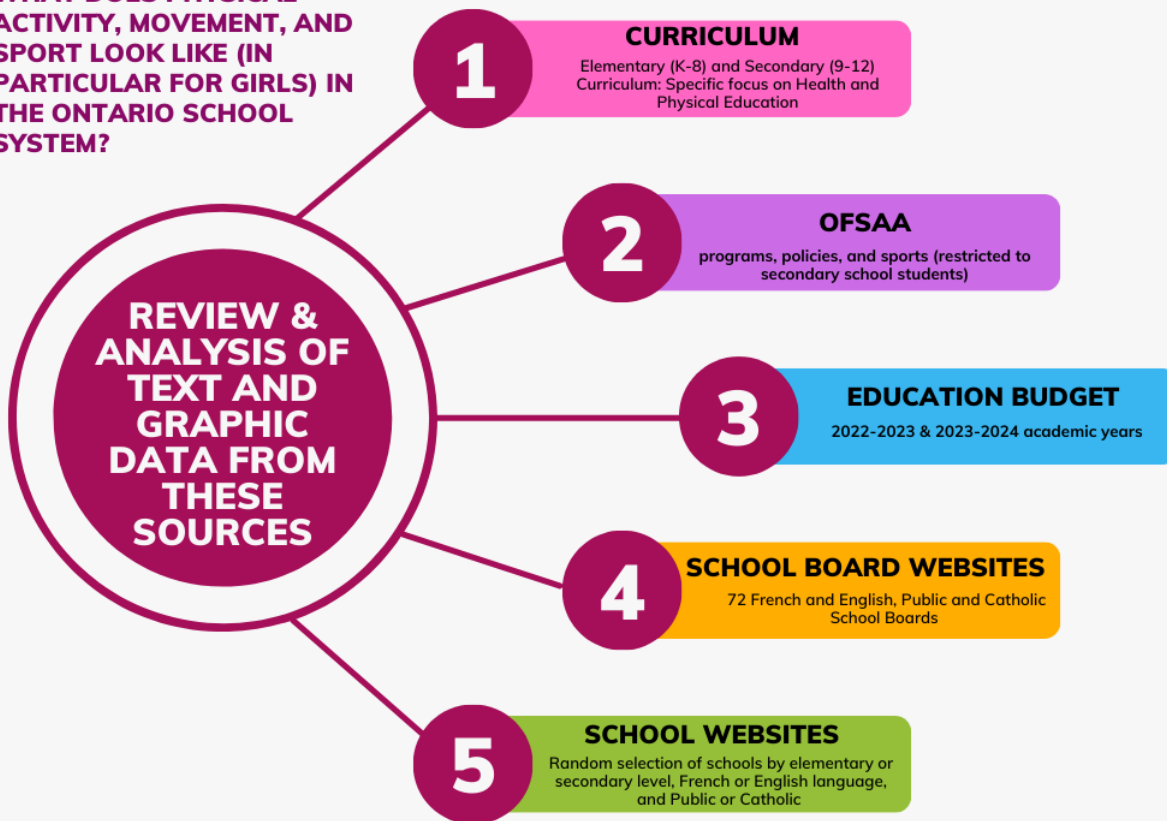
DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

- DATA ANALYSIS of data from Ontario to present a snapshot of girls' perceptions and participation rates in physical activity, movement, and sport. School leaders also completed a survey.
- INTERPRETATION of informal discussions with teachers and administrators in the Ontario Public and Catholic school boards to provide 'lived experience' specific to youth (and specifically girls) physical activity, movement, and sport.

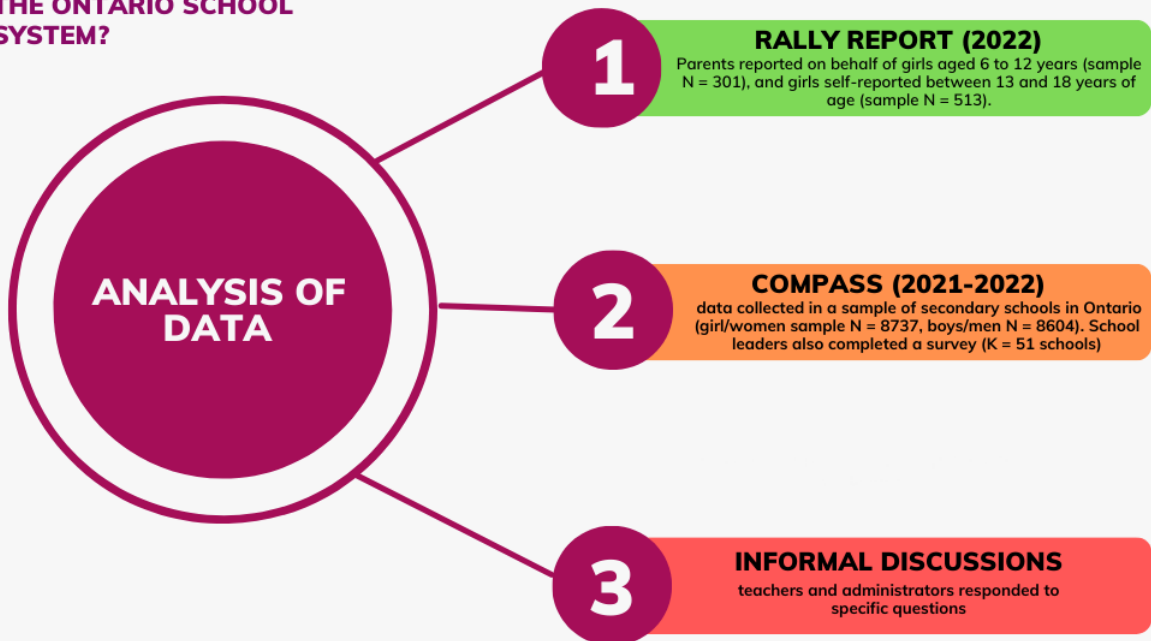
Specific data sources are presented on the next page



WHAT DOES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, MOVEMENT, AND SPORT LOOK LIKE (IN PARTICULAR FOR GIRLS) IN THE ONTARIO SCHOOL SYSTEM?



WHAT DOES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, MOVEMENT, AND SPORT LOOK LIKE (IN PARTICULAR FOR GIRLS) IN THE ONTARIO SCHOOL SYSTEM?



Phase 2

To address the question:

“what are girls’ and education leaders’ beliefs and perceptions of physical activity, movement, and sport in Ontario schools?”

Self-report survey data

- Data will be collected in 2023–2024 academic year using self-report surveys from parents (of youth under age 12 years), youth (ages 12–18 years), and education leaders to describe:

- ✓ **Perceptions of physical activity, movement, and sport opportunities**
- ✓ **Barriers and motivators for school-based physical activity, movement, and sport**
- ✓ **School environments, leadership, and role modelling**

Key Insights



Participation in school physical activity, movement, and sport



Values of school-based physical activity, movement, and sport



Barriers to school-based physical activity, movement, and sport



Leadership and role modelling for girls

Participation rates are low for girls and opportunities need to be enhanced

Based on Canadian guidelines (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2021), students are recommended to get:

- An accumulation of at least 60-minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity involving a variety of aerobic activities;
- Vigorous physical activities, and muscle and bone strengthening activities should each be incorporated at least 3 days per week;
- Several hours of a variety of structured and unstructured light physical activities;
- Limited sitting for extended periods; and
- No more than 2 hours per day of recreational screen time.



16%

girls ages 6-12 years (reported by parents) participating in any school-based sport



21-30%

girls ages 12-18 years participating in school intramural and/or varsity sport



41%

girls not meeting Canadian physical activity guidelines. 53% of boys met guidelines

Nearly 35% of girls aged 12-18 years report 0 days of physical activity, movement, or sport

21%

Very few photos and descriptions of sport participation on school and board-level websites.

- Information was inconsistently presented and at the school-level inconsistently available.
- It was challenging to find information on physical activity, movement and sport



limits awareness of participation

School sport Opportunities

At the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association (OFSAA; i.e., secondary school student-level sport), the gender balance in available sports opportunities is almost equal

Individual Sports

- individual sports have parity and offer both boys and girls competition
- 5 out of 12 individual sports also have a para-athletics division

Team Sports

- boys have seventeen options to play sport, where girls have sixteen.
- Differences in sport opportunities:
 - BOYS: baseball, lacrosse, and football
 - GIRLS: slo-pitch and field hockey

36%

boys participating in
varsity school sport

29%

girls participating in
varsity school sport

Accurate perceptions of student participation are key to supporting more physical activity, movement, and sport at Ontario schools.



Teachers reported inaccurate and large discrepancies in the amount of physical activity students were getting per week

A fundamental challenge that school boards and schools face is in creating physical activity and sports spaces that are sensitive to all users' needs and interests, especially for girls and gender diverse individuals. Instead of focusing on 'girl-friendly' physical activity, movement, and sport, the emphasis should be on opportunities that are 'child-' and 'youth-friendly,' namely supportive and positive environments (Bailey, Wellard, & Dismore, 2019). Schools also need to develop new and innovative ways to get and keep girls active. Current models of participation and opportunities for movement are arguably driven by hegemonic ideals and masculine norms. Working with girls, in co-developed strategies, may help improve participation rates.

Participation rates are low for girls and opportunities need to be enhanced

Summary findings:

- Many girls are not participating in physical activity, movement, and sport
- School sport opportunities are generally equal for boys and girls, yet fewer girls participate
- Teachers and school leaders have unclear and discrepant perceptions of student physical activity, movement, and sport
- Schools and school boards do not present information on physical activity, movement, and sport in ways that show support and encouragement

The values of school-based physical activity, movement, and sport are far-reaching yet not adequately acknowledged

It is important to understand how schools and school board documents portray physical activity, movement, and sport. There were a number of benefits recognized in various reviewed materials.

Benefits of physical activity, movement, and sport		
• mental health	• socially support	• self-esteem & confidence
• physical health	• connectedness	• academics

Mental health continues to be a focus at all levels of education.

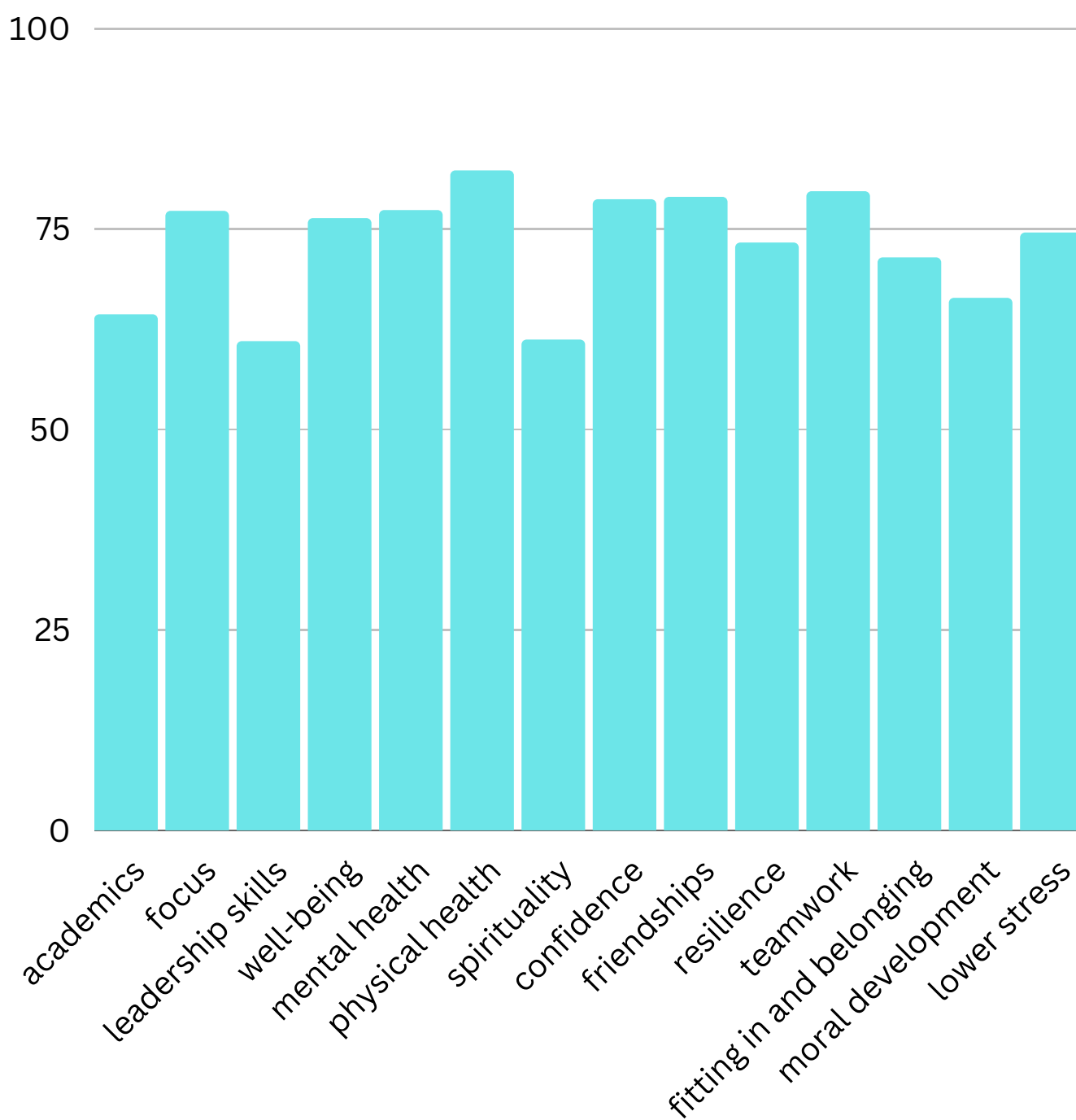


many government and board-level documents and websites ignore the important links between physical activity, movement, and sport and various student-focused benefits such as mental health. There are missed opportunities for encouraging physical activity, movement, and sport throughout the available documents.



Student-reported benefits of physical activity, movement, and sport

At least 60% of the sample of girls from Ontario suggest far-reaching health and psychosocial development benefits of physical activity, movement, and sport that should be highlighted across school and school board documents.



The values of school-based physical activity, movement, and sport are far-reaching yet not adequately acknowledged

Summary findings:

- School and school board documents highlight some but not all benefits of physical activity, movement, and sport
- Girls report tremendous and far-reaching benefits that need to be highlighted in school-based materials
- Teachers and school leaders also recognize the value of physical activity, movement, and sport
- The specific link between mental health and physical activity, movement, and sport needs to be prominently featured within the Ontario school system

A number of barriers to physical activity, movement, and sport are addressable at the school level in Ontario

The key barriers to physical activity, movement, and sport have school level, board level, and student level underpinnings. At the school level, access to facilities and limited opportunities appear to be consistent barriers across the reviewed documents and secondary data analysis. At the board level, competing curriculum and unclear priorities may be the biggest barriers to overcome. And, there are many student-level barriers reported to originate from school and board supports.

1**Access to facilities and equipment****2****Limited physical activity, movement, and sport opportunities****3****Competing curriculum and cultural pressures****4****Diverse student-level barriers**

1

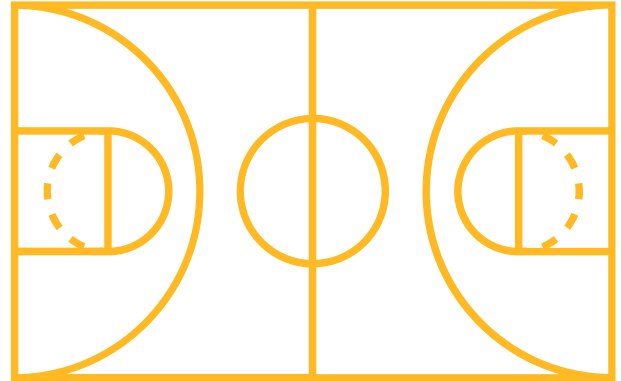
Access to facilities and equipment

One teacher in a large-sized city in the west region of the province mentioned they could not get students into sport because of access to facilities. Nonetheless, the secondary schools generally report some access to physical activity, movement, and sport facilities.

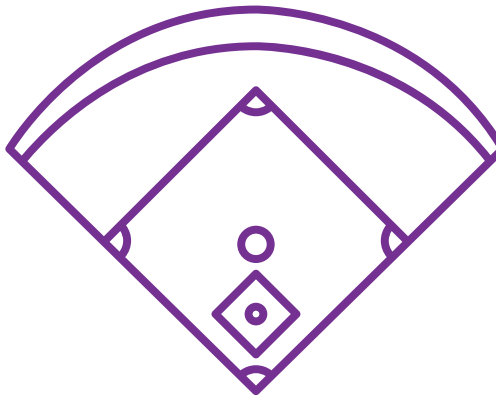
Gymnasium & indoor facilities

~50%
after school

>40%
during lunch and breaks



Outdoor facilities (e.g., fields, diamonds)



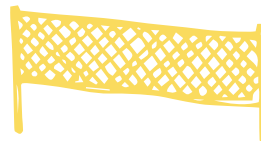
66%
available before & after school

 21% before school

 43% at lunch and during breaks

 33% after school

Equipment (e.g., balls, nets)



Supportive environments for physical activity, movement, and sport are important – especially for girls to feel safe and comfortable.

Secondary schools report some supports for physical activity, movement, and sport

75%	94%	50%	80%
Lockers	Change rooms	Privacy stalls/curtains	Showers

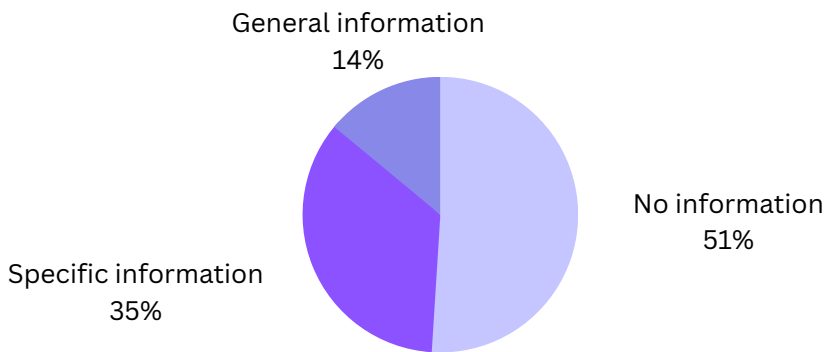
2

Limited physical activity, movement, and sport opportunities

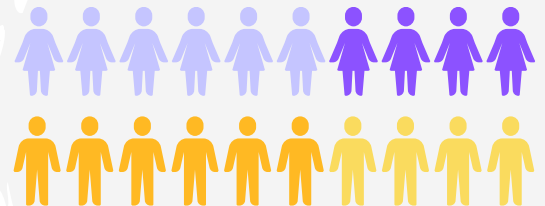
The availability of sports, especially for elementary school students, is a barrier to participation. The secondary school level has OFSAA, and some consistency to sports offered across school boards and schools with their connections to the various OFSAA regions. It is unclear if there is consistency in inter-school sports offered at the elementary level across Ontario.

More than half of the school boards and schools had NO physical activity, movement, and sport information on their websites and public-facing documents. A lack of information **limits awareness and interest.**

Physical activity, movement, and sport information presented on school board and school websites






Unclear gender balance in the way school sport opportunities are presented



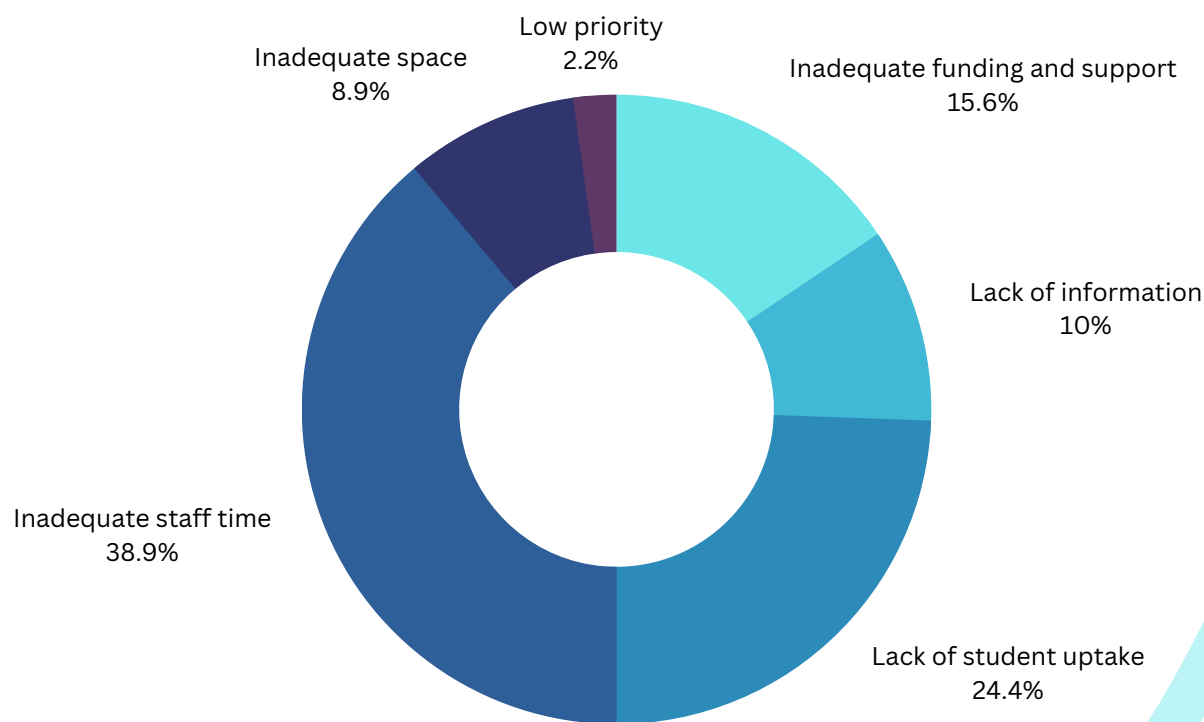
Information at school board and school levels was also inconsistent



Less specific information on physical activity, movement, and sport from:

-  Smaller school boards and schools
-  Catholic school boards and schools
-  French school boards and schools

School leaders report key challenges to improving access and opportunities for physical activity, movement, and sport as:



Funding and budget for physical activity, movement, and sport across Ontario schools may be a barrier

It was unclear how much funding or budget school boards and schools allocated to interschool, intramural, and club athletics and if there was a gender balance in spending on sports.

A secondary-level teacher highlighted that school boards and schools with football would have a gender imbalance in spending, since football costs are typically significantly larger than most other sports (National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, 2019).



School leaders reported that schools have had to reduce sports programs in the last few years.

- > over 60% of schools have cancelled some of their varsity sports programming
- > <5% of schools had to cut all programs
- > 40% of schools cut all intramural programming

3

Competing curriculum and cultural pressures

Physical activity is not identified as a top priority for schools in Ontario. The top health priorities included mental health and bullying/violence. Competing priorities make it difficult for schools to address physical activity, movement, and sport.

14% schools across Ontario identified physical activity as a top three priority for their school

0% of schools reported physical activity as the top priority

The ministry of education and other provincial government documents also present a lot of information. This information is at times inconsistent and difficult to navigate - making it hard to understand where and how efforts should be directed.



A teacher discussed the challenges that physical education was limited to 60-minutes a week at the school they work in, and the blocks for available education made it difficult for consistency.



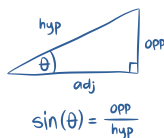
The administrators at the school had also made it challenging to achieve the daily physical activity requirement with competing math and literacy (and others) curriculum demands and lack of gymnasium space and equipment.

Daily



20min

physical activity, movement, sport



60min

mathematics



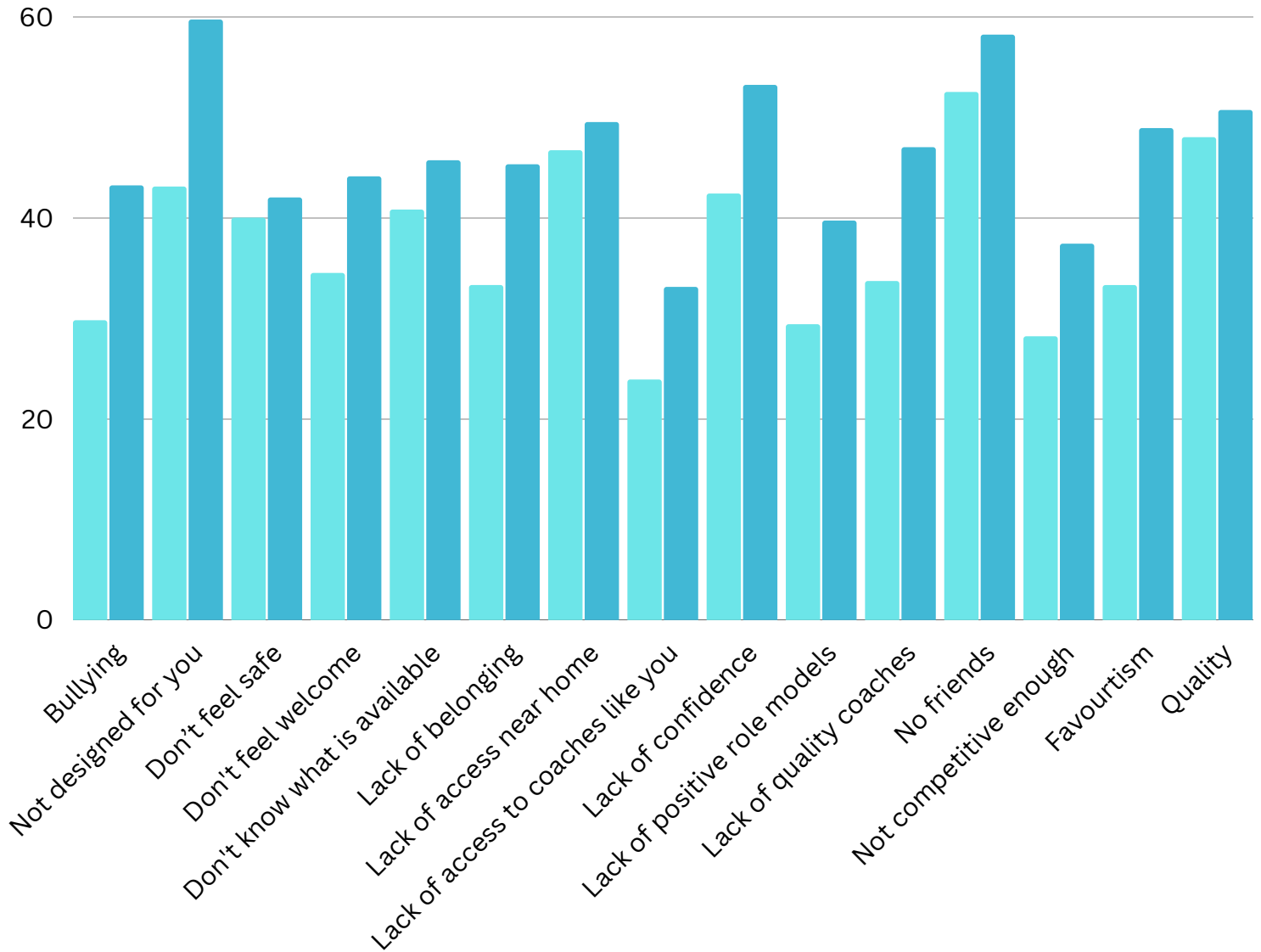
100min

literacy

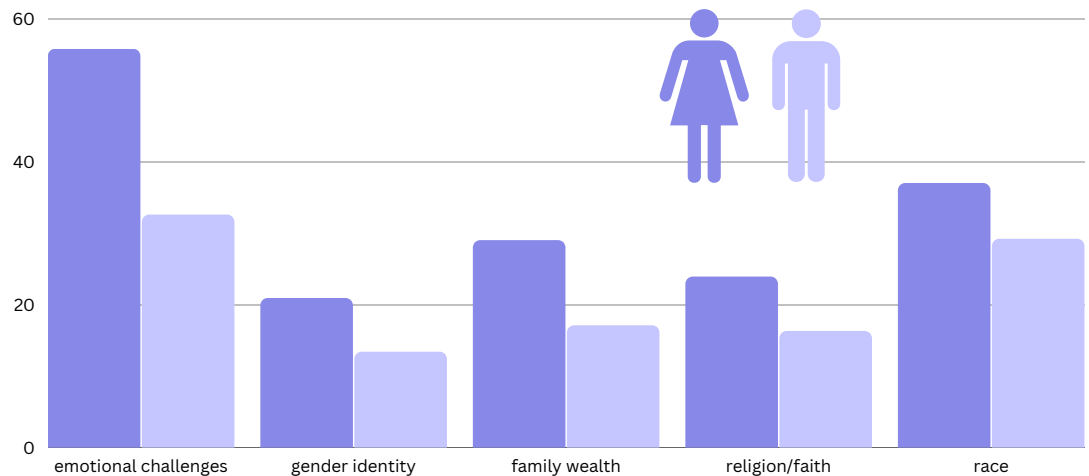
4

Diverse student-level barriers

Barriers of relevance to schools in Ontario were reported by parents of girls ages 6 to 12 years and girls aged 13-18 years. The prevalence of various barriers to physical activity, movement, and sport:

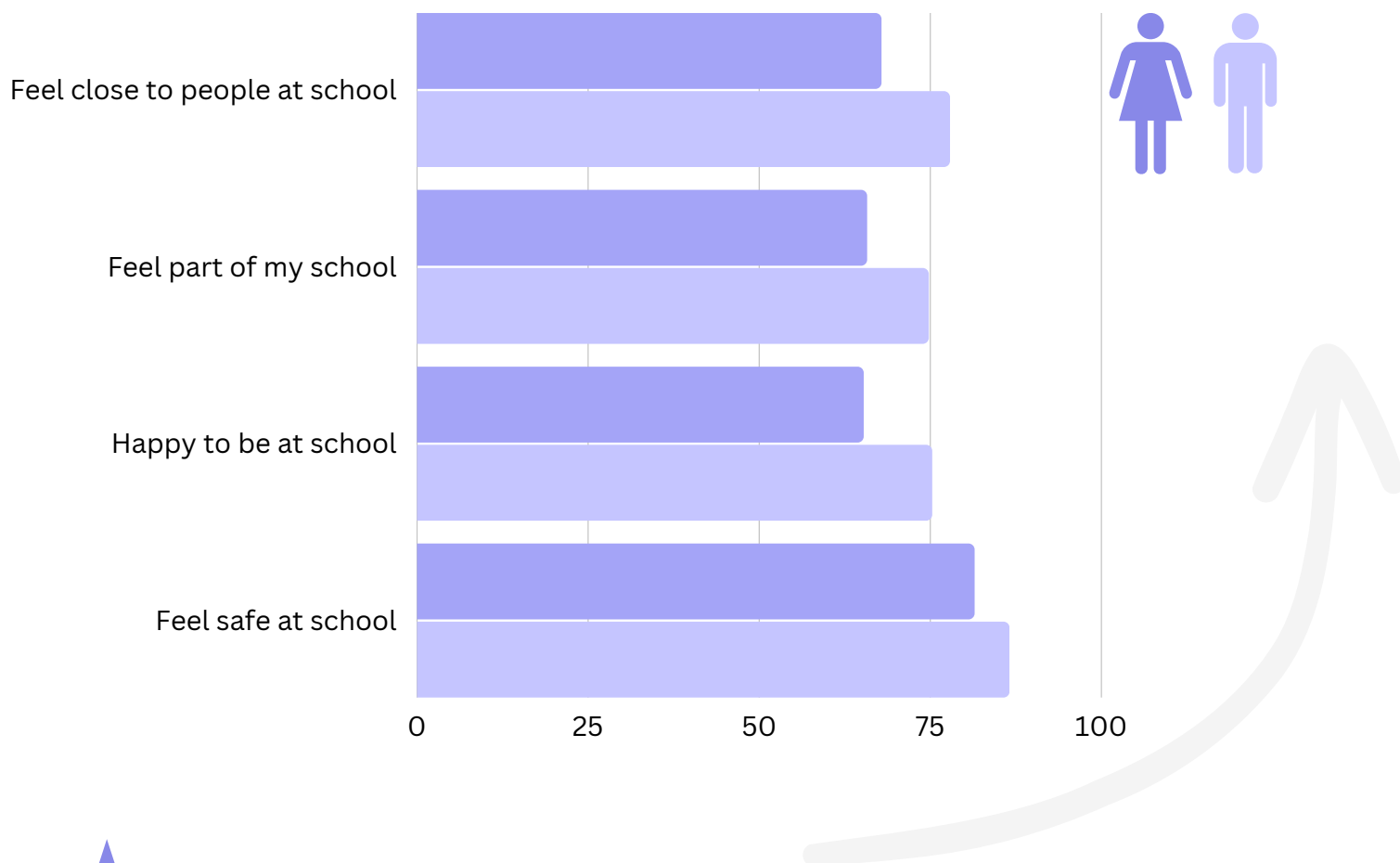


Many girls (and boys) also feel unwelcome at school due to mental health, gender identity, social class, religion, and race. These feelings are commonly reported barriers to physical activity, movement, and sport



It also appears that fewer girls are reporting feeling close to others at school and feeling a part of their school. Given the importance of social support and belongingness as coping, resilience, and self-esteem factors for girls, schools need to take notice of this trend.

Perceptions of school belongingness and safety.



★ **Importantly, there is strong empirical evidence that physical activity, movement, and sport can help address most - if not all - of the student-reported barriers.**



A number of barriers to physical activity, movement, and sport are addressable at the school level in Ontario

Summary findings:

- At least half of the schools report access to space and equipment for physical activity, movement, and sport opportunities.
- Budget allocation for boys, girls and mixed gender sports may be a barrier to participation because of a lack of opportunities.
- Based on the reported barriers, schools need to focus on addressing many of the challenges that girls face to being more active. Many of the barriers are also reported by a greater number of girls as they get older and reach secondary school.
- Schools and school boards need to highlight more physical activity, movement, and sport opportunities, enhance the visible and accessible information presented in reports, policy documents, and websites, and highlight the value and benefits throughout all public-facing materials.
- Addressing the barriers to help more youth participate in physical activity, movement, and sport needs to be a priority. More support, interest and participation may transpire.

Leadership and role modelling in physical activity, movement, and sport is impactful

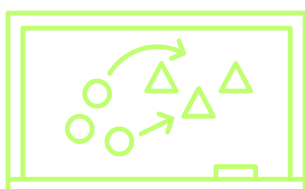
Teachers, administrators, other support staff are all some of the first role models in students' lives and can all play a crucial leadership role. All these role models provide valuable support to students when they are physically active and modelling lifestyles to emulate (Canadian Women and Sport, 2022).

Girls generally report being more comfortable talking to their parents/guardians on important topics related to psychosocial development, and teachers second to coaches and other support people in their lives. Many of the topics are important to the physical activity, movement, and sport context in schools in Ontario.

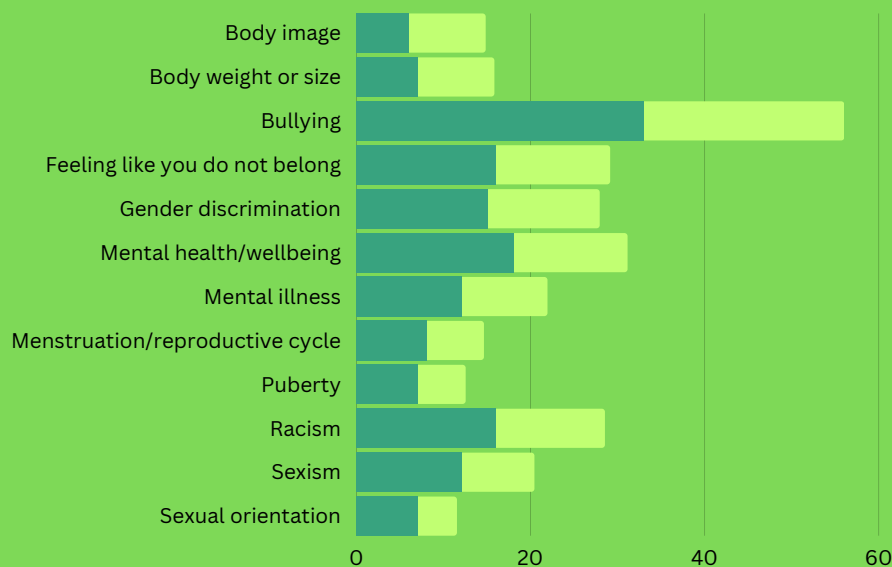
% of girls reporting they would speak to a teacher or a coach at school about important psychosocial factors



teacher



coach



Teachers are role models

©

~30% of girls in Ontario reported a teacher as an ideal role model for them, ranking teachers among the third highest group of potential role models

Ideal role models for girls' physical activity, movement, and sport:

- 1 parents/guardians
- 2 friends
- 3 teachers
- 4 coaches
- 5 elite athletes

Gender similarity was a preference, with 40% of girls suggesting wanting a role model with the same gender identity. This said, more than half of the sample reported that ability, age, gender, race, and sexual orientation are not critical criteria for role models in physical activity, movement, and sport.

From the review of documents and data at schools, school boards, the representation of female teachers and specifically coaches was indeterminable.

OFSAA had the most information when it comes to representation of sports in Ontario.

Winning OFSAA team sport photos - where available - showed...

64% winning boys teams coached by men/males

82% winning girls teams coached by males and females

→ 2 winning girls teams coached exclusively by males
3 teams coached by females

Ultimate frisbee is the only co-ed (mixed-gender) sport within OFSAA. Of the four winning teams at the OFSAA Ultimate Frisbee tournament, one photo had both male and female coaches and the remaining teams had male coaches.



Leadership and role modelling in physical activity, movement, and sport is impactful

Summary findings:

- Teachers and administrators are identified as key role models for physical activity, movement, and sport.
- Female leaders are under-represented in text and graphics specific to physical activity, movement, and sport.
- Teachers and administrators, particularly those who volunteer to coach, can be formative role models in adolescents. Generally, fewer girls play sport compared to boys and having those female coaches as role models could be crucial to keep girls in sport – important for lifelong physical activity, movement, and sport participation.

Next Steps

Schools are critical to the foundations of physical activity, movement, and sport. The gaps to school participation, and gender inequities, need to be addressed.

Based on the data from this report, there are key tangible and addressable calls to action:



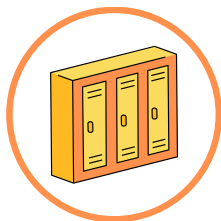
01. Increase opportunities for girls to participate in physical activity, movement, and sport at school

...at least 50% of girls report participation in sport, yet less than 20% are reporting school sport.



02. Work with school leaders to impart the benefits of physical activity, movement, and sport – especially mental health

...highlight, coordinate and develop resources to support provincial policies for both schools and school boards demonstrating the far-reaching health and psychosocial development benefits of physical activity, movement, and sport. These resources should intersect and overlap with other policies, especially mental health and wellness.



03. Schools need to provide safe spaces for physical activity, movement, and sport

...lockers, change rooms, and privacy stalls for girls (and all students regardless of gender) are needed to feel safe and comfortable.



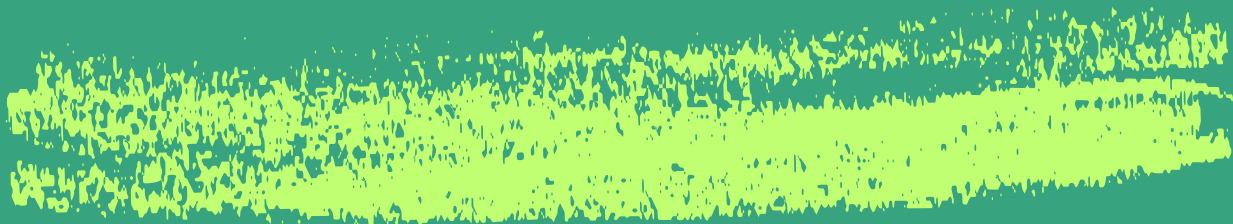
04. Provide resources and supports for more female teachers and administrators to coach sport

...especially girls intramural and varsity sport.

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APPENDIX



Federal and Provincial Ministries, Agencies and Partners

The websites from the federal and provincial ministries, agencies and partners detail where information was reviewed, analyzed, interpreted, and coded.

Federal

Federal Information for Physical Education, Movement, and Sport

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
There are no federal policies for education in Canada. This is the group of provincial ministers. We looked at the Programs & Initiatives and Research & Publications as it relates to physical activity, sport, and movement.

<https://www.cmec.ca/en/>

PHE Canada
Review of several programming policies available, including but not limited to, Fundamental Movement Skills Series, Intramurals, Mental Health, and Physical Literacy.

<https://phecanada.ca/>

Provincial

<p>Provincial Information for Physical Education, Movement and Sport</p>	
<p>Ministry of Education The team reviewed the latest ministry news for insights on curriculum changes. Other areas explored included information for students, parents and teachers. Changes to the news and program/policies continued through the summer.</p>	<p>https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-education</p>
<p>Education in Ontario Reviewed the elementary and secondary resources for "Your Child's Education." The researchers also noted the focus, for instance, the new four-year math strategy.</p>	<p>https://www.ontario.ca/page/education-ontario</p>
<p>Ministry of Education – Curriculum We looked at the Transferable and Cross-Curricular Skills, as well as the 'resources' tab in the top-middle left.</p>	<p>https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/</p>
<p>Ministry of Education – K-8 Physical Education Curriculum We reviewed the resources, the content of the curriculum, and the curriculum context.</p>	<p>https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/curriculum/elementary-health-and-physical-education</p>
<p>Ministry of Education– 9-12 Physical Education Curriculum We reviewed the resources and the content of the curriculum.</p>	<p>https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/curriculum/secondary-hpe</p>
<p>Ministry of Education Helping to Create Healthy Schools Review of the Physical Activity, Healthy Growth and Development, and Mental Health resources</p>	<p>https://www.ontario.ca/page/helping-create-healthy-schools</p>
<p>Ministry of Education Indigenous Education in Ontario Searched for resources to connect Indigenous activities and education to physical education.</p>	<p>https://www.ontario.ca/page/indigenous-education-ontario</p>
<p>Ministry of Education Ontario public school contact information Information used for the data collection for School Boards and Schools in the 72 English and French, Public and Catholic Boards</p>	<p>https://data.ontario.ca/dataset/ontario-public-school-contact-information</p>
<p>Ministry of Education Education in Ontario: policy and program direction Review of Policy/Program Memorandums: 138: Daily physical activity in elementary schools, grades 1-8 144: Bullying prevention and intervention 169: Student Mental Health</p>	<p>https://www.ontario.ca/document/education-ontario-policy-and-program-direction</p>
<p>Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations Please see [Ontario Federation of Secondary School Athletic Associations for more detailed and analyzed information eblwo] for information reviewed, analyzed and coded.</p>	<p>https://www.ofsaa.on.ca</p>
<p>Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition Review and analysis of the schools who meet the Ontario Healthy Schools Criteria. Review of the programs and resources. See OPHEA Health Schools Coalition Data for more information and data analysis below.</p>	<p>http://www.ontariohealthyschools.com</p>

Ontario School Boards

Information collected from the 72 English and French, Public and Catholic Boards. This is divided into 4 tables; i) general information, ii) physical activity, movement, and sport information, iii) curriculum and policy guidelines for physical activity, movement, or sport, and iv) any other information on mental and physical health.

General Information Collected about Ontario School Boards including Public, Catholic, French and English

General Information	
School Board	
Website Update	Date update or date researcher opened this site
School board phone number	
Postal code	
Director of education	
Executive assistant	
Number of schools in the school board	Separated by Elementary and Secondary (where the information was available)
Number of students	Separated by Elementary and Secondary (where the information was available)
Number of teachers	
Number of French Immersion schools	Separated by Elementary and Secondary (where the information was available)
Academic Programs Available	Gifted, IB, High Performance Sport
Does the website have any information regarding accessibility?	Yes, No
If yes to accessibility provide notes	
School board phone number	

Physical activity, movement, and sport Information Collected about Ontario School Boards including Public, Catholic, French and English

Is sport information easily accessible?	Yes (41%), No (59%)
Is physical activity mentioned on the website homepage?	Yes (20%), No (80%)
Are the benefits of physical activity outlined on the website? (does not have to be on the home page)	Yes (1%), No (99%)
Are there parent-specific information and resources about physical activity?	Yes (19%), No (81%)
Are there student-specific information and resources about physical activity?	Yes (27%), No (73%)
Are sports events and activities advertised?	Yes (23%), No (77%)
What is the gender balance of the sports events and activities?	Girls, Boys, Mixed Gender
Does the school board promote or encourage physical activity (not related to intramural or interschool sport)?	Yes (7%), No (93%)
Are there images of sport, movement, or physical activity on the school board website?	Yes (21%), No (79%)
If there are photos of sport, movement, or physical activity on the website who is in the photos?	Girls (18%), Boys (12%), Mixed Gender (70%)
Is there an elementary specific athletic association?	[Note: see below on how the authors approached elementary athletics]
If there is an elementary athletic association provide the website link.	[Note: see below on how the authors approached elementary athletics]

Physical Activity, Movement, Sport, and Health Curriculum Guidelines and Policies in Ontario Public, Catholic, English, and French School Boards

Is the Daily Physical Activity mentioned or referenced on the board website?	Yes (9%), No (91%)
Is there information regarding the updated Health and Physical Education Curriculum?	Yes (45% and 60% of these 'Yes' answers directed viewers to the Ministry of Education HPE Curriculum), No (55%)
Is the information regarding physical activity congruent with the current 24-Movement Guidelines?	Yes (7%), No (93%)
Is the school part of the OPHEA Health Schools Program?	Yes, No – There are 311 schools in Ontario Associated with OPHEA Healthy Schools. See information below.
If yes, what level of Health Schools Program is the board at?	Gold (200), Silver (70), Bronze (34), Member (7). There is more information below on OPHEA Healthy Schools

Mental Health and Physical Activity Resources Available for Ontario Public, Catholic, English and French School Boards

Are there mental health resources listed on the school board website?	Yes (83%), No (17%)
Is 'physical activity' included or mentioned in the mental resources?	Of those that included Mental Health Resources on their school board website, only 30% of these resources connect mental health and physical activity.

Information about Elementary Sports Availability on School Board Websites

The team of researchers looked across all 72 School Boards to look at the elementary sports options for students. The team coded as following:

- i. General Information – If a school board said there were sports opportunities for elementary sports options but did not say what the sports offered to students were. The team also checked event calendars for sports. (14% of schools)
- ii. Specific Information – If a school board listed the specific sports available to elementary students. At times it was challenging to decipher girls compared to boys sports. The research team assumed mixed gender teams when sports were listed as ‘soccer,’ ‘baseball,’ ‘flag football,’ etc. Sometimes the sports were not listed on the website but the team of researchers checked the event calendar and located specific sports throughout the year. (35% of schools)
- iii. No Information – If a school board had no information about sports listed for elementary students. (51% of schools)

This information was presented in the main report.

Information about Elementary Sports Availability on School Websites

Information was also collected from 5% randomly sampled Elementary and Secondary Schools part of the 72 English and French, Public and Catholic Boards.

The research team noted early in the search that school websites were limited in the information the schools could change; the school sites look to be a template site from the school board. The school websites looked to be similar under each of the boards (e.g. in the Rainy River School Board, all the Rainy River elementary and secondary schools had similar website layouts). With this limited ability to change the school websites the team limited their search of websites; the team noted that no new information was gathered from different schools in the same school board. In the second phase for the teacher and administrator survey it may be worth asking if there is a different website for physical activity, movement, and sport for the school. And if yes, to see if the information the team sought below is more readily available.




















Information Collected about Ontario Public and Catholic Schools (Preliminary; 5% of Elementary and Secondary Public and Catholic Schools for both English and French Education)

Region	
School Board	
School Board Type	Public, Catholic
School #	
School Name	
School Level	Elementary/Secondary, Elementary, Secondary
School Language	(English/French)
School Type	Public, Catholic
Date the school opened	
Website Update	Date update or date researcher opened this site
Postal code	
Number of Students	Including codes: 1 = small (<150 students), 2 = medium (150-250 students), 3 = large (250+ students)
Any Support Staff	Looking for mental health coach/coach staff, psychiatrist, psychologist
Academic Programs Available	Gifted, IB, High Performance Sport
Sport, Movement, and Physical Activity Specific Information Collected	
Is Sport, Physical Activity, or any Movement Information Available on the Website	Yes, No
If yes to above on sport, movement, and physical activity	Notes provided
Are there any photos of students playing sport or doing any physical activity (including dance, fitness)?	Yes, No
If yes to photos, is there a gender balance	Yes, No
Other notes about the photos collected	

Ontario Federation of Secondary School Athletic Associations

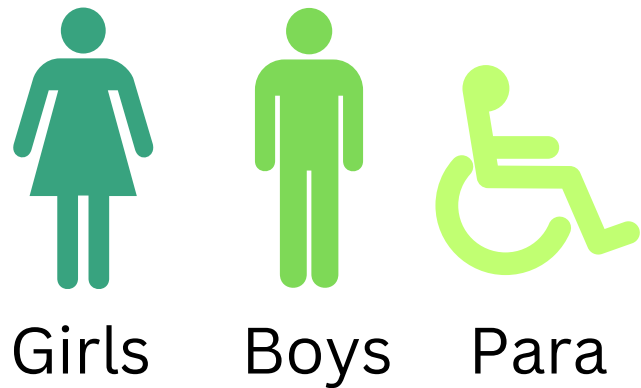
The research team compared the sports available for boys and girls at OFSAA. In addition, data was collected on para-sport where available.

Team Sport

Basketball	 
Curling	 
Hockey	 
Rugby	 
Soccer	 
Volleyball	 
Baseball/Softball	 
Ultimate Frisbee	 
Field Hockey	
Field Lacrosse	
Football	

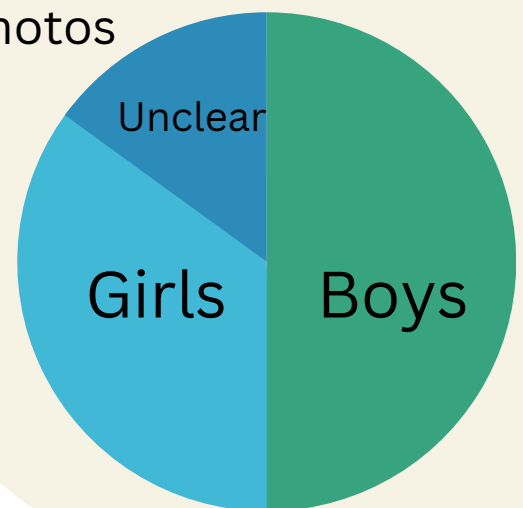
Individual Sport

Alpine Skiing	  
Cross-Country	  
Golf	 
Alpine Snowboard	 
Nordic Skiing	  
Swimming	  
Track and Field	  
Wrestling	 
Badminton	 
Tennis	 



The team of researchers also looked at the poster photos for the Individual OFSAA Festivals, which would host both boys and girls, to code sex/gender representation. **Boy athletes were more visible in these photos.**

% photos

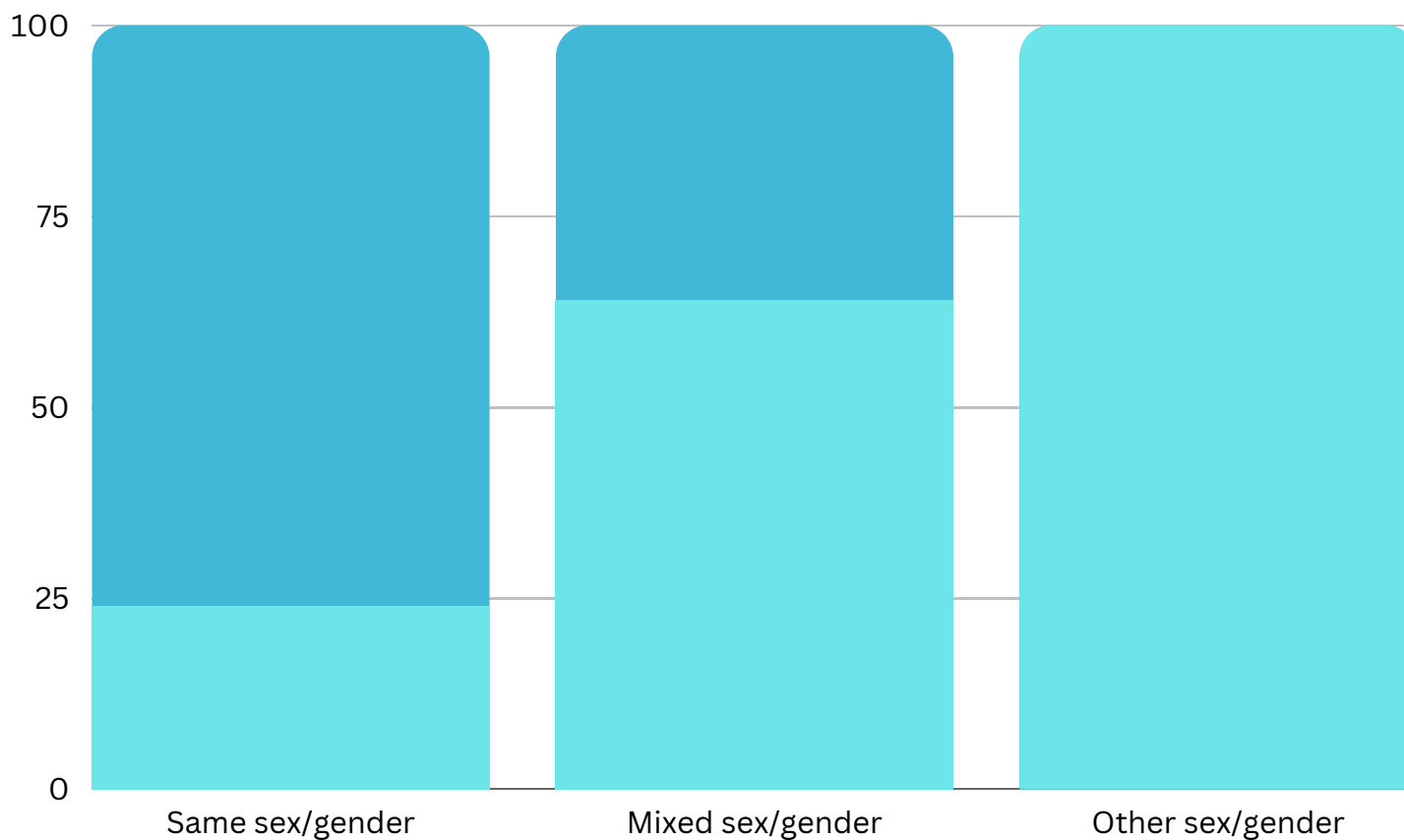


Ultimate Frisbee

played co-ed or mixed gender. Teams are made up of 7 players. Points alternate between gender ratios to maintain a gender balance through the game. There is a disc flip where the winning team gets to decide the starting gender ratio.

The research team also looked at sex/gender representation for coaches in available photos with winning OFSAA teams. The coding is below.

Sport	
Participant Photo	Boy(s), Girl(s), unclear
Coding for Coaches of the Winning Team Photos	1 = coaches of the same sex/gender, 2 = coaches from both sexes/genders, 3 = coaches of the opposite sex/gender, -99 = no winning team photos



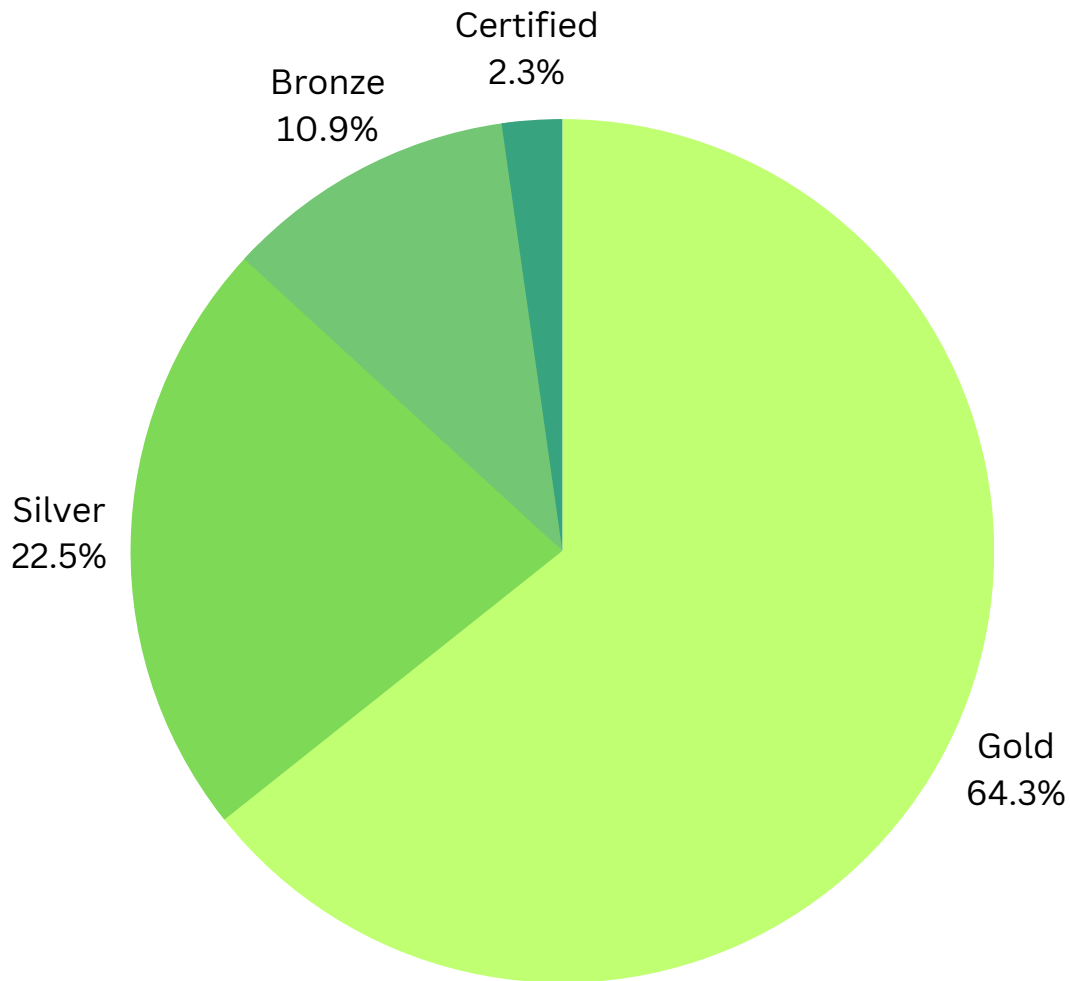
Girls sport teams



Boys sport teams

OPHEA Health Schools Coalition Data

- 42 of the 72 Ontario French, English, Public and Catholic School Boards participated in the Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition.
- 311 Schools in the 42 School Boards participated in the Ontario Schools Healthy Schools Coalition. There are 4 levels of certification, gold (200), silver (70), bronze (34) and certified (7) based on points a school can earn. Most of the schools earned a gold certification.
- A couple School Boards stood out: Simcoe County District School Board had 114 of the certified 311 schools; The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board school board was second with 40 of the 311 certified schools.



Informal discussions with school leaders

Questions and responses for discussions with school leaders in the Ontario Public and Catholic School Boards

General information

What is the name of the school you work at?	XXXX [redacted]
What is your School ID #?	
Do you work at a:	Catholic School (1) , Public School (3)
The primary language for instruction at my school is:	English (4), French (0)
What is your role or position at the school you work in?	Primary Teacher, Junior Teacher, Assistant Curriculum Leader of Health & Physical Education – Athletics, HPE Educator
I work with grades (e.g., elementary, secondary K-6, 9-12, etc.):	
How many years of experience do you have working in education?	
Your knowledge of physical activity, sport, and exercise at this school is:	Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor
What is your gender?	Woman, Man, Transgender Woman, Transgender Man, Non-Binary, I prefer to identify as: (with an additional text box), I prefer not to disclose
What is your age?	25-years-old or younger, 26- to 35-years-old, 36- to 45-years-old, 46- to 55-years-old, 56-years-old or older, prefer not to disclose
Do you identify as racialized?	Yes, No, Prefer not to disclose
Do you identify as Indigenous?	Yes, No, Prefer not to disclose

Informal discussions with school leaders

Questions and responses for discussions with school leaders in the Ontario Public and Catholic School Boards

Physical activity, movement, and sport-specific questions and responses

What is your overall perception of the way boys, girls, and gender-diverse students participate in physical activity, movement, and sport at your school specifically for intramurals?

“I believe boys, girls and gender-diverse students love to have the opportunity to join an intramural team and practice their sport skills in a non-judgemental, fun and encouraging environment. The non-competitive approach to intramurals is engaging and comforting for many students.”

“there is a limited access to facilities for intramurals”

“low”

“No intramurals at the school currently”

What is your overall perception of the way boys, girls, and gender-diverse students participate in physical activity, movement, and sport at your school specifically for interschool sport?

“In my experience as an educator students who try out for a varsity, club or school sport team are those individuals who participate in that specific sport competitively outside of school on a rep or house league team (i.e., rep hockey, soccer, volleyball, track and field, cross country, 3-pitch, etc.). Students who are interested in playing this sport at school and do NOT play outside of school are often intimidated by their peers and do not try out. I find this especially to be the case on co-ed teams.”

“Our club sports are for grade 4 and 5 only / we have mainly equal engagement on both the boys and girls teams. Varying somewhat by sport (currently we offer cross country, soccer, basketball, and track and field).”

Informal discussions with school leaders

Questions and responses for discussions with school leaders in the Ontario Public and Catholic School Boards

Physical activity, movement, and sport-specific questions and responses

What is your overall perception of the way boys, girls, and gender-diverse students participate in physical activity, movement, and sport at your school specifically for physical education?

“When teaching gym I find boys, girls and gender-diverse students enjoy participating in games-based physical education (i.e., learning basic skills and movements of a wide variety of sports through engaging and inclusive games). Games-based physical education engages students in movement, while simultaneously increasing active participation and developing physical and health literacy. Collaboration, safe play and social-emotional learning skills are fostered through games-based physical education.”

“As the HPE teacher for K-3 classes, I can say that the engagement during gym class is very similar across the gender spectrum. There are definitely some games that girls and boys gravitate to in different ways. For example, basketball is a huge interest for the grade 1-3 boys, but not the girls. However, the grade 4 girls were all very interested in trying out for the basketball team.”

“there is a gross disadvantage when we do not bring students to sport.”

What is your overall perception of the way boys, girls, and gender-diverse students participate in physical activity, movement, and sport at your school specifically for before and after school activities?

“Before and after school activities are limiting to many students who are unable to come to school early, or stay late. As an educator, if and when possible, I strive to foster inclusivity by hosting practices, intramurals, clubs or meetings during recess/lunch to allow all students who wish to attend. A large population of the students at Lydia Trull are bussed to and from school, and/or are unable to attend due to other obligations at home (i.e., walking a younger sibling to/from school)”

“Our before school Team Unbreakable Run Club has a high engagement and is made up of equal numbers of girls and boys”

Informal discussions with school leaders

Questions and responses for discussions with school leaders in the Ontario Public and Catholic School Boards

Physical activity, movement, and sport-specific questions and responses

What barriers do boys, girls, and/or gender-diverse students report to being able participate in the various physical activity opportunities at your school?

"Inappropriate footwear, rides to and from school for morning and after school practices, rides to the tournament/competition, unable to purchase equipment required to play the sport, responsibilities at home (i.e., walking younger sibling to/from school)."

"Time balance with school, number of students picked for a given team, academic priorities with choosing classes, lack of diverse change rooms."

"Truth be told, I haven't looked closely at the barriers that may exist for our students when it comes to participating in physical activities at school. There does seem to be an early experience of "who is good" at sports.

This is a conversation that takes place amongst the kids. I wonder about the barrier that mentality has for children who might be interested in participating but don't see themselves as capable or skilled."

"kids cannot get in because of access to facilities and because of different cultures."

Identify if there are more or less boys compared to girl students participating in physical activity at your school?

"More boys participate in physical activity at my school."

"More boys."

"As mentioned previously, basketball is one area I notice more boys

involved than girls. At recess, soccer is a very popular sport and is predominantly boys as well."

Are the opportunities to be physically active fairly equal for all students at your school? In not, explain.

"All classes at school have a physical education for 125 minutes a week. As per ministry expectations, students are to participate in 20 minutes of DPA per day. I have my students participating in physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day, as I notice significant improvements in their concentration, work ethic and final product."

"More boys teams run in general - we don't have a girls' rugby team or tennis team compared to the boys."

"I think so! However, we are a small school and there are limited numbers of sports and structured opportunities for students. It is my mission to change this with intramurals and a campaign to help every child "find their thing".

"All Students have 100 minutes of PH each week. PE competes with 100 minutes of literacy and 60 minutes of mathematics daily."

Is the equipment, including uniforms, used fairly equally for all students at your school? In not, explain

"Yes. All students have access to equipment and uniforms. If a student wishes to try out for a sports team and does not have access to equipment at home, as a coach I always find a way for the student to participate (i.e., borrowing equipment, school equipment, I will purchase for the student to use, etc.)."

"Equipment is equal, but boys' uniforms were newer, but it is fairly equal now too because we are conscious of it."

"The boys grab and dominate the soccer nets at recess."

Other Websites and Programs Reviewed Minimally or Not Included in this Report

Below is a table of websites the research team interacted with but did not include in detail in this report. Reviewing these sites help to inform the researchers perspectives about physical activity, movement, and sport in Ontario Public and Catholic, English and French School Boards and Schools.

<p>PHE Canada Review of several programming policies available, including but not limited to, Fundamental Movement Skills Series, Intramurals, Mental Health, and Physical Literacy.</p>	<p>https://phecanada.ca/</p>
<p>Ontario Physical and Health Education Association OPHEA champions healthy, active living in schools and communities through quality programs and services, partnerships and advocacy.</p>	<p>https://ophea.net</p>
<p>Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines CSEP provides guidelines on the integration of physical activity, sedentary behaviour, and sleep</p>	<p>https://csepguidelines.ca</p>
<p>Fast and Female Fast and Female is a Canadian charity on a mission to keep self-identified girls aged 8-14 healthy and active in sports.</p>	<p>https://fastandfemale.com</p>
<p>Canadian Women and Sport CWS partners with sport organizations, governments, and leaders to build better sport through gender equity. We're experts on systemic change and strive to build a stronger, more equitable sport system for girls and women and for all Canadians</p>	<p>https://womenandsport.ca</p>
<p>Canadian Tire's Jumpstart Jumpstart helps kids overcome financial and accessibility barriers to sport and recreation in an effort to provide inclusive play for kids of all abilities.</p>	<p>https://jumpstart.canadiantire.ca</p>
<p>Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Canada's leading mental illness research facility.</p>	<p>https://www.camh.ca</p>
<p>Ontario Association for the Support of Physical and Health Educators (OASPHE) educators who provide a strong voice to lobby, advocate and support the development and delivery of quality curriculum in Health and Physical Education</p>	<p>https://www.oasphe.org</p>
<p>Ontario Teachers' Federation Useful links for Health and Physical Education</p>	<p>https://www.otfeo.on.ca</p>



Next Steps

Phase 2 of this work will see primary data collected from students, parents, and school leaders. The thoughtful and meaningful responses will help to build from the strengths and look for solutions to close the gaps.

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