



PHE Canada

Physical & Health Education Canada

What is the relationship between Physical Education and Physical Literacy?

What is Literacy?

The United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognizes literacy as a **basic requirement** for a person to be able to fully participate in society. Their *Education for All* goal states that “literacy is crucial to the acquisition, by every child, youth and adult, of essential life skills that enable them to address the challenges they can face in life...” (UNESCO, Education for All).

Based upon this definition, literacy is not restricted merely to reading and writing. Literacy is concerned with how we communicate in society. It is about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language and culture.

Physical and Health Education Canada defines physical literacy as:

Individuals who are physically literate move with competence in a wide variety of physical activities that benefit the development of the whole person.

What is Physical Literacy?

Physical literacy focuses on the development of the whole child — meaning it is not just about the understanding and practice of physical activity, it also includes a child’s knowledge and understanding of **why** physical activity is important and its resulting benefits, as well as the development of attitudes and habits to practice these skills on a regular basis.

Physically literate individuals:

- Consistently develop the motivation and ability to understand, communicate, apply, and analyze different forms of movement.
- Demonstrate a variety of movements confidently, competently, creatively and strategically across a wide range of health-related physical activities.
- Make healthy, active choices throughout their life span that are both beneficial to, and respectful of their whole self, others, and their environment.





Just as literacy development in language arts facilitates an increased motivation to read a wide variety of literature, a physically literate student will be much more likely to participate in a wide variety of physical activities and will do so in ways that are beneficial to themselves and to others around them. Such a foundation is not only important for students now, but serves as a foundation for participating in lifelong physical activities.

What is the relationship between physical literacy and physical education?

Physical Education is a school curricular subject that supports the development of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for participating in active, healthy living. Physical education programs are an integral component of the total school experience for students.

Who is Responsible for Teaching Physical Literacy?

	Where?	Physical Literacy	Who?
LTAD Stage	Home Pre-schools Day care Sport programs Community recreation	Active Start Girls and Boys 0-6	Parents/Guardians Day care providers Pre-school teachers Kindergarten teachers
	Schools Sport clubs Community recreation Sport programs Home	FUNDamentals Girls 6-8, Boys 6-9	Teachers Coaches Recreation leaders Youth leaders Parents/Guardians
	Schools Sport clubs Community recreation Sport programs Home	Learn to Train Girls 8-11, Boys 9-12	Teachers Coaches Recreation leaders Youth leaders Parents/Guardians

FIGURE 1

Adapted from: Canadian Sport Centres, Long Term Athlete Development Resource Page, V2, p32

A quality physical education program encompasses a wide variety of carefully planned learning experiences from sport skills to outdoor skills, to dance and gymnastics. Attention to developmentally appropriate curricular goals and learning outcomes ensures that children of all abilities and interests are able to build a foundation of movement experiences and knowledge.

Quality physical education programs provide the best opportunity to develop physical literacy in children and youth, helping them to make healthy and active choices now and throughout their lives. After all, every child, regardless of age, gender, culture, socio-economic status or ability goes to school, and when they have the opportunity to participate in quality physical education throughout their school years, they will have had the opportunity to experience a variety of activities in a progressive, sequential format that ensures maximum learning and enjoyment.

The concept of physical literacy is becoming an important focus in provincial physical education curricula. The recently revised health and physical education curriculum in Ontario identifies the **development of physically literate students as the foundation of student learning from grades one to 12**. In Saskatchewan, physical literacy is considered a critical characteristic of an effective physical education program within its renewed curriculum. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the development of physically literate students is a key outcome in the newly revised Intermediate program. It is only a matter of time until every ministry of education in Canada identifies physical literacy as a foundation of their physical education curriculums.

What is the role of physical education in supporting the development of physical literacy?

Well planned physical education programs complement sport specific training and help to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for life-long sport and physical activity participation (Canadian Sport Centres, 2008) (see figure #1).

The Canadian Sport Centre's Long Term Athlete Development model (LTAD) recognizes physical literacy as the foundation for developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for Canadians to lead healthy active lives. The LTAD defines physical literacy as: "...the development of fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills that permit a child to move confidently and with control, in a wide range of physical activity, rhythmic (dance) and sport situations. Physical literacy also includes the ability to "read" what is going on around them in an activity setting and react appropriately to those events" (Higgs et al., 2008, p. 5).

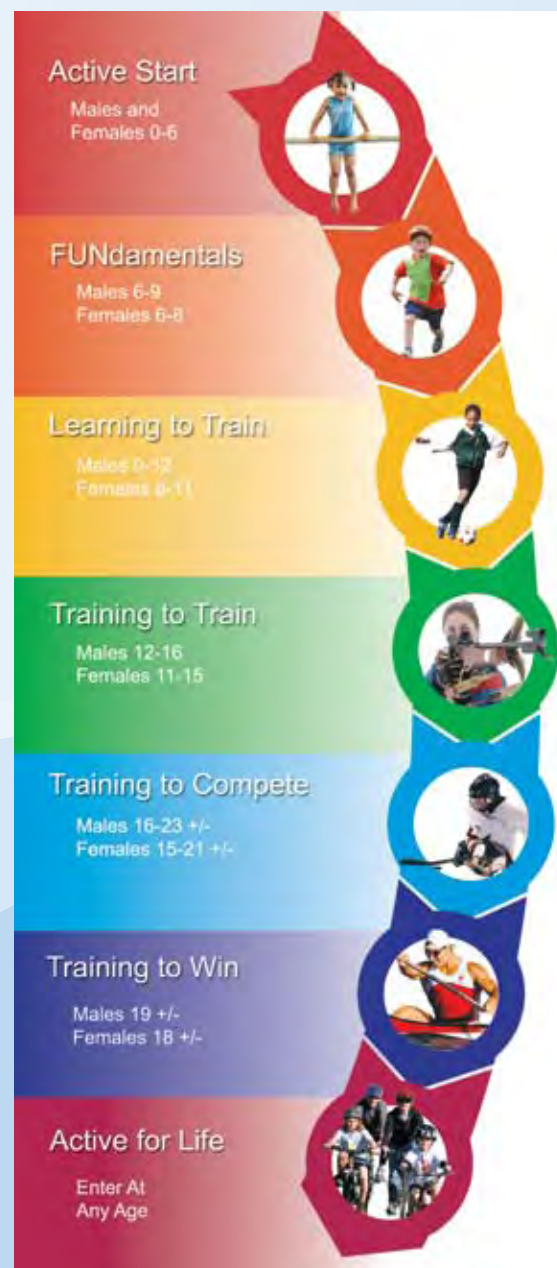
The LTAD promotes physical activity for all based upon a developmental progression.

- By encouraging a positive physical activity experience at a young age through active play and games (Stage 1 – **Active Start**) and fostering the development of a variety of well-structured activities that develop basic skills (i.e., Stage 2 – **FUNDamentals**), children begin to develop the physical literacy skills that will enable them to move with poise and confidence across and within a wide variety of physical activities.
- These basic skills then form a solid platform to learn overall sport skills which can be transferred across a number of different types of sports in the **Learning to Train** phase (Stage 3).
- By the time adolescents (12 – 16 yrs for males / 11 – 15 yrs for females) reach the **Train to Train** phase (stage 4), they are ready to consolidate their basic sport-specific skills and tactics into more specialized forms of physical activity.
- Those individuals who wish to pursue high performance/competitive opportunities proceed through **Training to Compete** (Stage 5) and **Training to Win** (Stage 6).
- Those that have developed a solid foundation (through Active Start, FUNDamentals, and Learning to Train) now have the foundation to lead a physically active lifestyle now and into the future – **Active for Life** (Stage 7).

How do we foster physical literacy?

PHE Canada has developed standards for the delivery of a quality physical education program. These standards provide the foundations of a positive learning environment and further support the development of physical literacy.

Although each province has its own unique physical education curriculum, there are many common principles that are consistent with fostering physical literacy development through a quality physical education program. Using the acronym "EDUCATION", PHE Canada has developed the following principles that support schools and educators in developing physical literacy among their students. More information on these principles, including a series of podcasts can be found at: www.physical-literacy.ca



Pedagogical strategies to help foster...



E

ENJOYMENT

- Intrinsically motivate students by providing students with choice and skill development.
- Optimally challenge students where the challenge of an activity matches their skill level and encourages them to improve and succeed.
- Provide developmentally appropriate student-centered classes.
- Provide a high level of participation by all students in each class.

D

DIVERSE

- Ask ALL students to identify the types of activities they would like to learn.
- Use a wide range of forms of physical activity throughout the year (e.g., dance, gymnastics, games, fitness, outdoor pursuits).
- Include both traditional and non-traditional forms of physical activity.
- Include activities that promote cultural understanding and awareness.

U

UNDERSTANDING

- Offer well planned lessons that ensure all activities are linked to achieving curricular expectations and/or outcomes.
- Encourage deeper forms of understanding that go beyond simple knowledge. Encourage various forms of communicating knowledge, analyzing movement, and applying movement and its principles across and within a wide variety of physical activities.
- Encourage students to be “intelligent movers.”

C

CHARACTER

- Ensure key character traits such as fair play, cooperation, and teamwork are reinforced through physical activities.
- Infuse the development of life skills in all physical activities. For example, through physical activities, students can learn critical life skills such as cooperation, positive communication, leadership, personal and social management, decision making, problem solving, conflict resolution, stress management, interpersonal skills, spiritual and moral development.

A

ABILITY

- Encourage individual improvement and avoid comparisons to others.
- Foster the development of a wide variety of fundamental skills in order for students to develop movement competence. These skills form the foundation for more complex movement skills in advanced grades. The transfer of these skills is encouraged in order to facilitate competence across a wide variety of physical activities.
- Provide refining cues to enable learners to improve their motor skills.

T

TOTALITY

- Provide students with opportunities to develop total body fitness. This includes providing a wide range of fitness activities that support the development of endurance, strength, and flexibility.

I

IMAGINATION

- Make creative and safe use of facilities and equipment.
- Encourage individuals or groups to generate creative solutions to various movement challenges. This can come in the form of creativity in a dance or a gymnastics sequence; strategic thinking during a game or an outdoor pursuit activity, or innovation in designing a personal fitness program.

O

ONGOING

- Offer physical education on a regular (preferably daily) basis.
- Emphasize the importance of active living and the acquisition of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that students need to make ongoing healthy choices now and throughout their lifespan.
- Provide a participation based intramural program that enables students to apply their skills learned in physical education.
- Identify areas of the community where students can be active outside of school (e.g., parks, trails, swimming pools, local sport clubs, etc).

N

NURTURING

- Ensure the whole child is nurtured: physical development (e.g., fitness, skill development), cognitive development (e.g., thinking, understanding, problem solving skills), and affective development (e.g., positive peer interactions, communication, spiritual, teamwork, cooperation).
- Offer appropriate activities for the age and stage of each student.

Standards of a quality physical education program:

1. Daily curricular instruction for all students (K-12) for a minimum of 150 minutes/week.
2. Qualified, enthusiastic teachers.
3. Well planned lessons incorporating a wide range of activities.
4. A high level of participation by all students in each class.
5. An emphasis on fun, enjoyment, success, fair play, self-fulfillment and personal health.
6. Appropriate activities for the age and stage of each student.
7. Activities which enhance cardiovascular systems, muscular strength, endurance and flexibility.
8. A participation-based intramural program.
9. Creative and safe use of facilities and equipment.

What can *you* do to support the development of physical literacy for all children?

Physical literacy is an important priority for educators and practitioners across Canada. In light of the ongoing challenges to ensure every child has the foundation that they need to be physically active and make healthy choices, it is vital that everyone with a responsibility to ensure the optimal development of children demonstrate their role in fostering physical literacy development for students now and into the future.

If you are a parent:

- Ensure that physical education is an integral part of your child's experience. Is there adequate time in the school curriculum? Is the teacher delivering the program qualified and enthusiastic? Is the school fully delivering the physical education curriculum?
- Support your child in a range of other physical activities that are motivating and fun. Don't forget that all activities do not have to be structured, but can simply be physical activities enjoyed with family and friends.

If you are a teacher:

- Ensure that physical education is valued as a core component of the school curriculum.
- Utilize resources to support the development of physical literacy in your physical education class. Visit www.physical-literacy.ca and www.phecanada.ca for a range of excellent tools.
- Plan physical education programs that are fun, develop knowledge and skills that are developmentally appropriate, and that offer a variety of activities.

If you are a school administrator:

- Ensure that quality physical education is included as a core component of the school curriculum.
- Assign qualified and enthusiastic teachers to the delivery of physical education.
- Allow for adequate time (150 minutes per week) and resources.
- Make other opportunities for physical activity a regular aspect of your school initiatives (i.e. play days, school challenges, winter active carnivals).

If you are Ministry of Education official:

- Mandate the delivery of quality physical education programs to 150 minutes of physical education.
- Support the hiring of physical education specialists to deliver the subject.



Physical & Health Education Canada (PHE Canada) has been Canada's premier professional organization for physical and health educators since its inception as the Canadian Physical Education Association (CPEA) in 1933. In 1948, it became the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (CAHPER), and then the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance in 1994. The 75th year of service to the profession saw the Association evolve to become Physical and Health Education Canada (PHE Canada).

Members of PHE Canada are predominantly educators working in the school system, the administrators who support them and the university professors engaged in pre-service teacher training and in research in physical and health education.



PHE Canada strives to achieve its vision by supporting schools in becoming "Health Promoting Schools" that include the provision of Quality Daily Physical Education and Quality School Health. Schools are supported through a range of programs, resources and initiatives.

Our Vision ...All children and youth in Canada living healthy, physically active lives.

Our Mission: Physical and Health Education Canada advocates for and advances quality physical education and quality health education programs offered in Health Promoting Schools to enable students the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to lead physically active and healthy lives, now and in their future.

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Canadian
Heritage

Patrimoine
canadien

Canada

301-2197 Riverside Drive, Canada K1H 7X3
Tel: (613) 523-1348 Fax: (613) 523-1206

Websites:

www.phecanada.ca
www.physical-literacy.ca



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