

Encouraging Active Schools

2015 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AT SCHOOL SURVEY



Physical Education in Canada

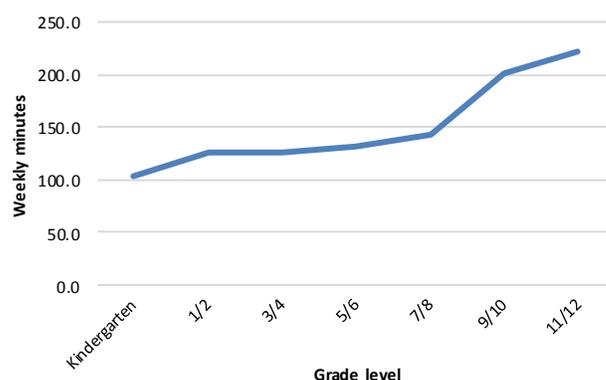
The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's 2015 Opportunities for Physical Activity at School Survey asked school administrators about the availability of physical education in schools. Administrators were asked the approximate proportion of students that take at least one physical education class during school year, the average number of days of physical education in a given week and the average time per class. Based on this information, the total number of minutes per week was calculated. This bulletin summarizes the findings in these regards.

According to the findings of the survey, the total average minutes in physical education per week more than doubles from roughly 100 minutes (roughly translates to approximately 20 minutes/day) among children in kindergarten to over 200 minutes (roughly translates to approximately 40 minutes/day) among secondary grade students. According to school administrators, virtually all students in the elementary grades (between kindergarten and grade 6) participate in physical education classes offered by the schools, as do those in middle grades (grades 7 and 8). This percentage decreases substantially in higher grades to only just over half of grade 12 students (55%). It is important to note that some of the schools may be in a semestered system, whereby students receive physical education for only part of a school year.

Compared to national average: students in grades 3 through 8 and going to school in the West receive more time in physical education; students in grades 9 through 11 and living in Ontario receive more physical education time; and, students in kindergarten, grade 7 and higher and living in Quebec receive less physical education time per week on average. Compared to the Canadian average, relatively fewer Quebec students in kindergarten take physical education, whereas relatively more in the West do so. Interestingly, the proportion of Quebec students in secondary grades remains high with more than 90% of students reportedly receiving physical education. This is also the case in the West for grade 9 and 10 students.

FIGURE 1

Average total time spent in physical education by grade



Opportunities for Physical Activity at School Survey, 2015, CFLRI

In Ontario, secondary students are less likely to take physical education (67% of students in grade 9 decreases to 38% of students in grade 12) when compared to the national average.

According to school administrators, students in the elementary grades (kindergarten to grade 6) who attend the smallest populated schools (less than 160 students) receive the most time in physical education compared to these students attending larger schools. On the contrary, students in secondary grades (grade 9 and higher) in the smallest schools receive the least amount of time in physical education. Secondary school students who are in the largest schools (460 students or more) are less likely than those in the smallest schools to take physical education. Grade 9 and 10 students in public schools are less likely than non-public schools to take physical education.

In a similar manner, students in elementary and middle grades (kindergarten to grade 8) who attend schools located in the smallest communities (less than 1,000 residents) and in rural environments generally receive the most time in physical education compared to students in larger communities (10,000 residents or more) and non-rural environments, respectively. Students who are enrolled in secondary grades (grade 9 and higher) and attend schools in the smallest communities (<1,000 residents) receive less time in physical education compared to those attending schools in larger communities (75,000 to 299,999 residents). Students in secondary grades (grade 9 and higher) who attend schools located in the smallest communities (less than 1,000 residents) are generally most likely to take physical education compared to students in schools in larger communities. In addition, administrators in rural schools report higher percentages of students taking physical education compared to those in suburban schools.

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