



## HIGHLIGHTS



## *Key findings*

***Only half of schools have a policy to provide daily physical education classes, however, physical education classes are offered two times per week by half of Canadian schools, and by only 16% of schools on a daily basis.***

### **Provision of physical education classes**

- Physical education classes are offered two times per week by half of Canadian schools, and by only 16% of schools on a daily basis. The median class time increases from 40 minutes for a junior elementary student to 75 minutes for a senior secondary student.
- The number of weeks of physical education classes decreases by grade. That is, secondary schools offer fewer weeks of physical education classes than do elementary schools, offering secondary classes for only 35 weeks per year compared with 40 weeks for elementary school students.
- The median duration of physical education classes is longer in Quebec schools than in Canada generally, however, given a slightly lower number of classes per week, the total time spent in classes may not differ.
- Larger schools offer longer physical education classes than do schools with less than 500 students. However, they offer fewer weeks of classes per year.
- Although French schools have considerably longer physical education classes than the average Canadian school, they offer fewer classes per week than the median. This is related to the results noted above for Quebec, and is due in part to the large concentration of French schools in that province.

### **Passive and active time during physical education classes**

- Half of schools report that students spend 80% of class time in physical education, engaged in physical activity. It should be noted that all students may not be continuously active during this “active” time. The median proportion of time spent in passive activity, such as standing around waiting, is 15% for all schools.
- There is no difference between elementary and secondary schools with regard to the proportion of active time and passive time spent in physical education class.
- Of students in any region, students in Quebec spend the greatest proportion of class time standing around (20%), and the smallest average proportion of time engaged in activity (70%). Students in regions other than Quebec spend at least 80% of their time engaged in activity during physical education class.

- French schools are less likely to report that students are physically engaged in activity during physical education. This is related in part to differences in Quebec schools compared to schools elsewhere.

### **Policies to provide daily physical education**

- 46% of schools do not have a policy to provide daily physical education classes to students. Of those that do, twice as many schools have written policies rather than generally understood, unwritten policies (36% versus 19%).
- Elementary schools are slightly more likely to have a policy for daily physical education (57%) than are secondary schools (51%).
- Schools with a smaller student population are more likely than those with a larger population to have a policy for daily physical education. Of those schools that do have a policy, smaller schools are more likely than larger schools to have an unwritten policy.
- English schools are more likely than French schools to have an unwritten policy (22% versus 6%).

***Although the majority of schools have a policy to hire qualified personnel for physical education, only two in five schools use only a physical education specialist to teach physical education.***

### **Staff resources for physical education**

- Physical education may be taught by more than one individual and these individuals may have more than one role within the school. Those most often responsible for teaching physical education at school are physical education specialists only (39%) and classroom teacher only (21%). Sometimes the teaching of physical education is a shared responsibility between one or more individuals (i.e. physical education specialist and a classroom teacher, principal, vice-principal, or volunteer), and this accounts for 39% of schools.
- Although these proportions vary, this overall pattern is fairly consistent across provinces. However, schools in the eastern provinces, and in Quebec, and Manitoba are more likely, whereas those in Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and the North are less likely to report using only a physical education specialist for teaching physical education.
- Elementary schools are more likely than secondary schools to report that only classroom teacher is responsible for teaching physical education (27% vs. 8% respectively), and less likely to report that only a physical education specialist is responsible for this instruction (31% vs. 53% respectively).
- Physical education specialists are more likely to take responsibility for teaching physical education at schools with a larger student population than at smaller schools.

- French schools are far more likely than other schools to have a physical education specialist teaching physical education to students. A full 79% of French schools report that only a specialist is responsible for teaching physical education.

### **Student-teacher ratio for physical education classes**

- Four-fifths of Canadian schools report that the student-teacher ratio in physical education classes is about the same as other classes. Of those schools reporting that this ratio is not the same as other classes, most report that it is either somewhat higher or substantially higher.
- Secondary schools are more likely than elementary schools to report that the student-teacher ratio is higher for physical education classes than for other classes.
- French schools more likely than English schools to report that the student-teacher ratio is unequal to that of other classes. French schools are more likely to report both that this ratio is higher, and to report that it is lower. This is due primarily to the differences between schools in Quebec compared to those in other provinces.
- The larger the student population in the school, the more likely it is that the student-teacher ratio in physical education classes is higher than that in other classes.

### **Coordination of physical activity opportunities**

- People responsible for coordinating physical activity opportunities may play a variety of other roles in the school. They are teachers or staff members (82%), and volunteers (90%). Students (11%) and paid monitors (5%) are less commonly responsible.
- Secondary schools are more likely than elementary schools to have teachers or staff members, students, or volunteers responsible for coordinating physical activity opportunities. Elementary schools are more likely than secondary schools to designate municipally paid monitors to coordinate physical activity opportunities.
- Three-quarters (77%) of very small schools report that teachers or staff members are responsible for physical activity coordination, compared with 88% of very large schools. Additionally, only 10% of schools with less than 200 students report that a student is designated to coordinate physical activity, compared with 19% of very large schools.
- Public schools are just as likely as non-public schools to have students, paid monitors, or volunteers to coordinate physical activity, but more likely to have teachers or staff members take on this role.

### **Policies to hire qualified personnel**

- 46% of all schools have a written policy to hire qualified personnel for physical education instruction, and an additional 28% have an unwritten or otherwise generally understood policy.

- Elementary schools are less likely than secondary schools to have policies to hire qualified personnel.
- Approximately one-third of all schools in the provinces of Ontario (36%), Saskatchewan (31%), Alberta (32%), British Columbia (37%), and in the North (40%) did not have a policy to hire qualified personnel for physical education instruction. Almost all schools in Quebec (97%) do have a policy to hire qualified personnel. Furthermore, Quebec schools are much more likely than schools in any other province to have a written policy (85%).
- Schools with smaller student populations are more likely than those with larger populations not to have a policy to hire certified personnel for physical education instruction.

***The majority of schools report having a policy for the provision of a broad range of physical activities, and this seems to be supported in practice.***

### **Components of the physical education program**

- The most prevalent components of physical education classes for both junior and senior students are health-related fitness, individual activity, and team or dual sports. These are the most prevalent components for both elementary and secondary schools; at least 90% of all schools report that these components are included in physical education classes.
- Specialized movement skills, fitness testing, and seasonal activities are more likely to be included in programming at secondary schools than at elementary schools.
- In general, the likelihood that specialized movement skills or fitness testing are included in fitness programming increases with student population size. The inclusion of seasonal activities is more prevalent in schools with 1,000 students or more than in smaller schools.
- French schools are less likely than other schools to include specialized movement skills and seasonal activities in physical education programming.

### **Emphasis of physical activity programming**

- Physical activity programming at school may focus on a number of elements, such as participation, leadership and social skills, lifelong physical activity skills, and positive attitudes. At least 85% of schools emphasize each of these elements, while leadership is most commonly emphasized.
- Physical activity programming at elementary schools is more likely than programming at secondary schools to emphasize leadership, lifelong activity skills, and positive attitudes.
- Virtually all schools in Prince Edward Island emphasize participation in physical activity leadership and social skills. In contrast, schools in Nova Scotia and Quebec

are the least likely to emphasize participation, and those in the North are less likely to emphasize leadership and social skills and positive attitudes. Finally, schools in the Prairie provinces are more likely to emphasize lifelong physical activity whereas those in Quebec are less likely to do so.

- The smaller the size of the school population, the more likely it is to emphasize lifelong physical activity in its programming.

### **Policies to provide a broad range of physical activities**

- Just over half of all schools (51%) of schools have a written policy to provide a broad range of physical activities to students, while an additional 35% have an unwritten policy to provide the same.
- Elementary schools are more likely than secondary schools to have this type of policy.
- Schools in the province of Quebec are less likely than schools in any other region to have a policy for providing a range of physical activities to students. Schools in the West and the province of Ontario are the most likely to have a policy.
- Public schools are slightly less likely than other schools to have a policy for providing a range of physical activities to students.
- Schools with a larger student population are more likely to have such a policy than those with smaller student populations.

***One-third of schools have no policy for ensuring adequate funding of equipment, and this is similar to the amount of schools expecting families to bear the cost of equipment.***

### **Financing of physical activity opportunities**

- The majority of schools expect students and their families to bear the cost of transportation (77%) and admission (84%) to physical activity events. Slightly more than two-fifths of all schools (43%) hold students and their families responsible for the cost of equipment for physical activity.
- This varies widely by province and type of support, with the largest gap occurring between schools in Newfoundland and Manitoba for family responsibility of transportation costs.
- Students of secondary schools are more likely than those of elementary schools to bear the cost of transportation to, equipment for, and admission to physical activity events.
- The larger the size of the student population, the more likely it is that students and their families are responsible for the cost of admission to physical activity events, transportation and equipment for events.

- Schools with the majority of students from families of lower income are less likely than those with the majority of students from families with higher incomes to bear the cost of equipment costs, as well as transportation and admission to physical activity events.
- Students in non-public schools are just as likely as public school students to be responsible for the cost of transportation and admission to physical activity events. However, public school students are more likely to be responsible for equipment costs (46%) than are students in non-public schools (42%).

### **Policies for funding for equipment**

- Approximately one-third of all schools do not have a policy to ensure ongoing funding for adequate physical activity equipment to meet the needs of students. Although 67% of schools do have a policy, only 27% of schools have a written policy.
- Elementary schools are just as likely as secondary schools not to have a policy for equipment funding.
- There is a general east to west trend in the likelihood that schools have a policy for equipment funding (58% in the East to 74% in the West).
- Public schools are less likely than other schools to have a policy ensuring ongoing funding of equipment.
- Schools with mostly low income students are less likely than other schools to have a policy for equipment funding.

### ***Policies to support of active commuting are generally lacking.***

- 73% of schools do not have a policy to support active transportation to and from school among students. Of those schools that do have a policy, approximately half have written policies and half have policies that are otherwise understood.
- Elementary schools are more likely to have a policy to support active transportation than are secondary schools.
- Schools in Ontario are more likely, and those in Quebec less likely, than the average Canadian school to have a policy to support active transportation among students.
- Rural schools are less likely than other schools to have a policy for active transportation.
- Schools in communities with a population of at least 75,000 are more likely than smaller communities to have a policy that supports active transportation.

***There generally appear to be facilities for physical activity in Canadian schools, however, larger schools express concerns about the adequacy of space in terms of overcrowding and safety issues.***

### **Indoor facilities for physical activity**

- Almost all schools (96%) have access to a gymnasium. Dance studios are the least common type of room available for physical activity: only 10% of schools have access to a dance studio.
- Weight rooms and other rooms for physical activity are more likely to be available to secondary schools than to elementary schools. As many as 68% of secondary schools have access to a weight room, compared with only 13% of elementary schools. Sixty-five percent of secondary schools have access to other rooms, compared with 37% of elementary schools.
- Schools with a larger student population are more likely than schools with fewer students to have access to a dance studio, a weight room, or other rooms for physical activity.
- Schools with students from mostly high income homes are more likely than schools with students from mostly low income homes to have access to a dance studio, weight room, or other room for physical activity.

### **Outdoor facilities for physical activity**

- Playing fields and baseball diamonds are the most prevalent outdoor facilities available to schools overall, with 94% of schools having access to playing fields and 86% having access to baseball diamonds.
- Elementary schools are more likely than secondary schools to have access to basketball hoops, playground areas, or paved areas, whereas secondary schools are more likely than elementary schools to have access to running tracks or tennis courts.
- Rural schools more likely than other schools to have access to baseball diamonds or playground areas, while suburban schools are more likely than other schools to have access to basketball hoops or paved areas.
- Schools with mostly high income students are more likely than schools with mostly low income students to have access to facilities, such as a basketball hoop, a tennis court, or paved areas.
- English schools are more likely than French schools to have access to playing fields, baseball diamonds, basketball hoops, running tracks, playground areas and paved areas.

### **Amenities supporting physical activity**

- Change rooms and bike racks are among the most common amenities supportive of physical activity available to schools (77% and 76% respectively). Showers and lockers are less commonly available, with about half of all schools reporting available showers, and slightly more than one-third reporting availability of lockers.
- Secondary schools are more likely than elementary schools to have access to showers, change rooms, and lockers.
- Schools with a larger student population are more likely than smaller schools to have access to amenities such as showers, change rooms, and lockers. Showers and change rooms are available at almost all very large schools (those with 1,000 or more students).
- Schools with mostly low income students are less likely than schools with mostly high income students to have access to any amenity supporting physical activity.

### **Municipal facilities for physical activity**

- The majority of schools report having access to municipal facilities such as skating rinks (70%), sport and recreation facilities (67%), community centres (59%), or walking or bicycling trails (66%). Less than half of all schools (41%) have access to municipal swimming pools.
- Elementary schools are less likely than secondary schools to have access to any municipal facilities except for community centres.
- Ontario schools are the least likely of schools in any region to have access to skating rinks (60%). Schools in the East are the least likely to have access to sport and recreation facilities (53%), and schools in the West are the most likely to have access to swimming pools (57%).
- Although rural schools are less likely than other schools to have access to sport and recreation facilities, walking or bicycling trails, or swimming pools, they are more likely to have access to skating rinks.

### **Adequacy of space for physical activity**

- At least two-fifths of all schools report that lack of adequate space for physical activity leads to overcrowding or safety concerns.
- Overcrowding is more often reported by secondary schools (48%) than by elementary schools (40%), and less often reported by rural schools than by schools elsewhere.
- Schools with a student population numbering at least 500 are more likely than smaller schools to report that lack of space for physical activities leads to some concern; over half of all schools with at least 1,000 students report that lack of space leads to overcrowding (59%) and/or safety concerns (51%).

- French schools are more likely than other schools to report that lack of space leads to overcrowding and safety concerns.

### **Meeting the needs of students**

- 70% of all schools report that their facilities meet the needs of students quite well for physical education and extracurricular programs. In addition, over half (58%) of all schools report that their facilities meet students' needs quite well for other physical activity and play.
- There is a general east to west regional increase in the proportion of schools reporting that their facilities meet the needs of students quite well.
- Secondary schools are slightly more likely than elementary schools to report that the facilities meet the needs of students quite well for physical education and extracurricular programs, whereas there is no difference for other physical activity and play.
- Schools with a student population of less than 200 are more likely than larger schools to report that their facilities don't meet the needs of students for either physical education and extracurricular activity, or for other physical activity and play.
- Suburban schools are more likely than other schools to report that their facilities meet students' needs quite well for physical education and extracurricular activity or play.

***The availability of health promotion programs and physical activity resources for staff, and physical education specialists in particular, are sorely lacking in Canadian schools.***

### **Availability of health promotion programs for staff**

- 70% of schools do not offer supportive programs, such as those for healthy weight management or incorporating physical activity into everyday life, to faculty and staff.
- Schools with a smaller student population are less likely than schools with a larger student population to offer health promotion programs to staff or faculty.
- Schools in rural areas are less likely than other schools to have health promotion programs available for staff and faculty.
- Non-public schools are no more likely than public schools to offer health promotion programs to faculty and staff.

### **Availability of physical activity resources for staff**

- Information about current research and guidelines is the most common resource available to staff: 34% of schools provide this information to physical education specialists, and an additional 28% of schools provide all staff with this resource.

- Although schools are more likely to provide each type of resource to physical education specialists rather than to all staff, only 22% of schools provide ongoing professional development to physical education specialists, and only 20% of schools provide information about physical activity promotion to this group.
- Certification for staff who are involved in students' physical activities and specific instruction by external experts are each offered to physical education specialists in less than 20% of all schools.
- Secondary schools are more likely than elementary schools to make physical activity resources available only to physical education specialists.
- Schools with a larger student population are more likely than smaller schools to offer physical activity resources exclusively to physical education specialists.
- French schools are less likely than English schools to provide all teachers and staff with resources such as physical activity research and guidelines, information about promoting physical activity, and certification for staff involved in students' physical activity. When French schools do provide these resources, they are more likely than English schools to provide these resources exclusively to physical education specialists.

***There appears to be a variety of extracurricular physical activities available to students through Canadian schools.***

#### **Extracurricular programs for physical activity**

- 85% of Canadian schools offer intramurals, 81% offer between-school activities, and 82% offer other physical activity outings to students.
- Schools in Prince Edward Island are the most likely to offer intramural activities whereas those in Quebec and the North are less likely to do so. A similar pattern holds for offering between-school activities, although Alberta is also less likely to offer such activities. Physical activity outings are most likely to be offered by school in Saskatchewan and those in Quebec are least likely to offer outings.
- Secondary schools are more likely than elementary schools to offer between-school activities and other physical activity outings, while both levels are equally likely to offer intramurals. Intramurals are the most common activity provided by elementary schools.
- Very small schools (those with less than 200 students) are less likely than other schools to offer any extracurricular program for physical activity. The likelihood that a school offers between-school activities and other physical activity outings increases with student population size.
- English schools are more likely than French schools to offer extra-curricular activities.

### **Transportation for extracurricular physical activities**

- 58% of schools provide transportation for between-school extracurricular activities, and 63% provide transportation for other activity outings.
- Secondary schools are more likely than elementary schools to provide transportation for between-school activities, with 66% of secondary schools providing this kind of transportation compared with only 55% of elementary schools.
- Schools with less than 200 students are more likely (71%) and schools with at least 1,000 students are less likely (51%) than other schools to provide transportation to physical activity outings.
- Public schools are less likely than other schools to offer students transportation for extracurricular activities.

### **Estimated involvement in physical activity during free time**

- Seven in ten schools report that the majority of students are active at recess, and six in ten report that the majority are active during lunch. Only about one in five schools report that the majority of students are active before school or after school.
- Secondary schools are far less likely than elementary schools to report that the majority of students are active during any break from class.
- Schools with a smaller student population are more likely than larger schools to report that a majority of students are active during breaks before, between, and after classes. In fact, at least 90% of very large schools (those with at least 1,000 students) report that less than half of all students engage in physical activity during any break from class.
- Rural schools are more likely than other schools to report that a majority of students are active before and after school. Schools in urban areas are the least likely to report that at least half of students are active at lunch time, and all schools are equally likely to report that a majority of students are active at recess.

### ***The majority of schools use provincial or territorial standards of evaluation.***

#### **Evaluation criteria**

- The criteria most often used to evaluate physical activity programs are provincial or territorial curriculum standards: 91% of all schools use these. One-third of all schools use national or international guidelines, and slightly more than one-quarter use Quality Daily Physical Education (QDPE) recognition award standards.
- Secondary schools are more likely than elementary schools to use any kind of evaluation criteria.

- Schools in Quebec and New Brunswick are less likely and those in the North are more likely to use provincial or territorial curriculum standards for program evaluation. Schools in Alberta are more likely, and those in British Columbia are less likely to use national or international guidelines to evaluate physical activity programs. Schools in the East and in Ontario are less likely, and those in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta more likely to use QDPE recognition award standards for program evaluation.
- Public schools more likely than non-public schools to use QDPE award standards, and are equally likely to use provincial/territorial or national/international guidelines when evaluating physical activity programs.

### **Frequency of physical activity resource evaluation**

- Most schools (66%) undertake an evaluation of their physical activity programs, facilities, and program instruction at least once a year. An additional 20% conduct an evaluation once every few years, and more than one in ten (13%) never evaluate their physical activity resources.
- Program evaluation occurs more frequently for secondary schools than for elementary schools, with 70% of secondary schools conducting an evaluation at least once a year, compared with 64% of elementary schools.
- Schools in the Eastern provinces and those in Quebec are more likely than schools in other regions to report that they never evaluate their physical activity resources.
- Very large schools (those with at least 1,000 students) are more likely than other schools to evaluate their physical activity resources at least once a year (77%). Very small schools (those with less than 200 students) are more likely than other schools to report that they never evaluate their physical activity resources (17%).

***Although a positive social climate towards physical activity appears to be prevalent in schools, accessibility to school facilities can be improved.***

### **Social support**

- Less than half (42%) of all schools have policies or programs which encourage support for student physical activity by other students. Support provided by teachers and parents is more commonly encouraged by schools: at least three-quarters of all schools encourage parental support (80%) and support by teachers (77%) for the physical activity of students.
- Elementary schools are less likely than secondary schools to have policies or programs that encourage any kind of support for student physical activity.
- Encouraging support from teachers, family, and other students is more likely to occur in Western schools and less likely to occur in Quebec schools

- Schools with mostly high income students are more likely than other schools to encourage peer support for student physical activity. Schools with mostly low income students are less likely to encourage teacher or parental support for the physical activity of students than are other schools.
- French schools are far less likely than English schools or Bilingual/ Immersion schools to have policies or programs which encourage any kind of social support for the physical activity of students.

### **Integrating physical activity into the broader school life**

- Most schools demonstrate only a low (42%) or moderate (44%) degree of support for integrating physical activity into broader school life.
- A low degree of support is particularly evident among schools in Quebec.
- Secondary schools are more likely than elementary schools to demonstrate a high degree of support to integrate physical activity into other areas of school life (18% vs. 13%).
- In general, a high degree of support for integrating physical activity into other school activities is more likely to be demonstrated in larger schools than those with a smaller population size.
- Schools with mostly low income students are the least likely to show a high degree of support for integrating physical activity into school life, while schools with mostly high income students are the most likely to show a high degree of support for such integration.

### **Recognition and awards for physical activity participation**

- Most Canadian schools offer some kind of recognition for physical activity. Three-quarters of all schools (73%) offer certificates or rewards for physical activity, and 66% offer awards or trophies for physical activity efforts (e.g. *Most Improved Player*). Approximately half of all schools host social events to publicly recognize individuals who participate in physical activity.
- Elementary schools are less likely than secondary schools to offer any kind of recognition for physical activity. Only 59% of elementary schools offer awards or trophies, compared with 83% of secondary schools, and only 41% of elementary schools host events to recognize students who participate in activities, compared with 65% of secondary schools.
- Smaller schools are generally less likely than larger schools to provide any kind of recognition for participation in physical activity. At least three-quarters of schools with 1,000 or more students host events to recognize participation by students, compared with only 40% of schools with less than 200 students.

- Schools with mostly high income students are more likely than schools with mostly low income students to host events to recognize individual students' physical activity achievements.

### **Promoting physical activity events**

- Seven in ten Canadian schools promote physical activity by publicizing information about, or organizing student participation in, special physical activity events in the community.
- Elementary schools are more likely than secondary schools to promote community physical activity events.
- Approximately three-quarters of schools in the North (79%), the West (77%), and the East (73%) and Ontario (72%) report promoting community physical activity events to students, whereas just over half (53%) of schools in the province of Quebec report promoting such events.
- Public schools are more likely than other schools to promote physical activity events in the community to students.

### **After school access for students**

- 52% of schools allow student access to indoor facilities after school hours, and three-quarters (76%) allow access to outdoor facilities after hours. However, 13% of all schools do not allow students to access either indoor or outdoor facilities after hours.
- Elementary schools are more likely to allow access to outdoor facilities after hours (77%) than are secondary schools (73%), and less likely to allow access to indoor facilities (45% compared with 72%).
- Schools in Quebec and Ontario are less likely than other schools to permit students access to indoor facilities after hours. Schools in the West are more likely, and schools in Quebec are less likely than the average school to permit students access to outdoor facilities after hours.
- Schools with larger populations are more likely than those with smaller populations to allow access to indoor facilities after hours.
- Public schools are more likely than other schools to allow student access to both indoor and outdoor facilities after school hours.
- Schools in larger communities are more likely than those in smaller communities to report that students are not allowed to access any facility after school.

### **Physical activity as a disciplinary measure**

- Scheduled physical activities, such as recess or gym class, are sometimes cancelled as a disciplinary measure. Three in five schools report that cancellation of these

activities happens some of the time: 19% report that it happens occasionally, while 41% report that it happens infrequently.

- Elementary schools are much more likely to use this kind of discipline at least some of the time (74%) than are secondary schools (38%).
- Schools in Ontario and the West are more likely than those in Quebec and the East to report canceling physical activity as a disciplinary measure.
- Schools with less than 500 students are more likely than larger schools to cancel opportunities for physical activity as a form of discipline.
- Schools with mostly low income students are more likely to use this form of discipline than are schools with mostly high income students.
- English schools are more likely than French schools to cancel opportunities for physical activity as a form of discipline.

### **Physical activity as a reward measure**

- Opportunities for physical activity, such as an extra recess or sporting events, can be offered to students as a reward for good behavior or academic achievement. Four out of five Canadian schools do offer this type of reward at least some of the time, but most offer it only occasionally (45%) or infrequently (27%).
- Elementary schools are more likely to offer this kind of reward to students (90%) than are secondary schools (57%); however, less than one in ten elementary schools rewards students with physical activity opportunities on a frequent basis.
- Schools with less than 500 students are more likely than those with 1,000 students or more to reward students with opportunities for physical activity.
- Schools in very small communities (those with a population of less than 1,000) are more likely than schools in larger communities to reward students with opportunities for physical activity.

***There appears to be a strong relationship between Canadian schools and their communities.***

### **Community consultation**

- One in three Canadian schools report that their school board consults with some community group, such as a municipal recreation department, to ensure that community needs for physical activity are considered before building or renovating a school. Half as many (14%) report that no consultation of this kind takes place. However, the majority (51%) do not know whether or not the community is consulted.

- Schools in the North are much more likely than schools in other regions to report that some kind of consultation between their school board and community groups takes place before building or renovating a school: 67% of schools do so. Less than half (43%) of schools in the West report this kind of community consultation, while approximately one-third of schools in the province of Quebec (27%), the province of Ontario (31%), and the East (34%) do so.
- Schools having the majority of its student population from higher income families are more likely to consult with local groups and recreation department than are those with the majority of its students from lower income families.

### **Shared use of facilities**

- Almost two thirds (63%) of Canadian schools report that there is an agreement between either the school or school board and a municipality to share the use of either school or municipal physical activity facilities. Slightly more than one in ten reports that no such agreement is in place, and one in four does not know.
- Secondary schools are more likely than elementary schools to report having a sharing agreement with a municipality.
- Of schools in any region, schools in the North and those in the province of Quebec are the most likely (75% and 80% respectively) to report that they have an agreement with a municipality for shared use of facilities. Schools in Eastern Canada are the least likely (49%) to report having such an agreement.
- Schools with a larger student population are more likely than those with a smaller population to report that they have an agreement with a municipality to share facilities.
- Schools in rural areas are more likely than other schools to report that they do not have a sharing agreement with a municipality.

### **Community access to school facilities**

- Community groups or individuals in the community have access to facilities at most Canadian schools (93%). Of those schools that offer community access, one-third charges user fees to all groups, whereas one-quarter does not charge fees to children, and one-fifth does not charge fees to any group or individual.
- Secondary schools are more likely than elementary schools to allow community access to facilities.
- Almost all schools in the West (96%), the East (93%), the province of Ontario (93%), and the North (91%) allow community access to school facilities. Schools in Quebec are less likely than the average Canadian school to allow community access to facilities: only 84% of schools do so. Schools in the West are the most likely to offer all community members free access to physical activity facilities.

- The likelihood that all groups pay to access school facilities increases as the size of the student population increases.
- Public schools are more likely than non-public schools to allow community members access to school facilities.
- Schools in rural areas are more likely than other schools to offer all community members free access to school facilities.

## *Future considerations*

Most schools have policies to support physical activity, however, many do not implement them in practice. An integrated program for promoting physical activity at school is key for achieving the goal of reducing physical inactivity among children. To do so, the following components should be addressed.

### **Provide comprehensive physical activity programming in schools**

Quality Daily Physical Education (QDPE) is an important strategy of the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) for increasing physical education in Canadian schools. Quality daily physical education builds awareness of the benefits of an active lifestyle, teaches skills that will encourage lifelong physical activity behaviour, helps to reduce the current inactivity rates among children and youth.<sup>8</sup> Schools could:

- provide quality daily physical education to students from kindergarten to high school graduation. Currently, physical education classes are offered two times per week by half of Canadian schools, and by only 16% of schools on a daily basis.
- ensure that physical education programs are taught by physical education specialists, or teachers with appropriate qualifications and training in physical education.
- promote physical activity programs and physical education classes that not only involve participation in physical activities, but teach lifelong skill-building and confidence-building behaviours to children and youth.<sup>9</sup> Physical activity programming at secondary schools are less likely than those at elementary schools to emphasize leadership and positive attitudes.
- promote participation in activities offered by physical activity programs and physical education classes that encourage lifelong physical activity behaviour. Currently, physical activity programming at secondary schools are less likely than those at elementary schools to emphasize lifelong activity skills.
- maximize the amount of time that students spend actively participating in physical activity during physical education. Ensure that adequate equipment exists, or modify activities, so that “waiting” time to use the required equipment is minimized. The

median proportion of time spent in passive activity, such as standing around, waiting time, is 15% for all schools.

- provide a variety of activities including both structured versus non-structured types of activities and competitive versus non-competitive activities in physical education classes. This will encourage participation by children and youth of all skill, development, and confidence levels, as well as promote lifelong physical activity. This is particularly important for pre-adolescent and adolescent girls.<sup>10</sup> Physical education classes seem to have a variety of physical activities, however, there is some room for improvement for the availability of seasonal activities.

### **Provide a supportive environment through school**

The school could be supportive through establishing a nurturing environment conducive to promoting healthy behaviours in general. Schools could:

- ensure that school facilities are available to students for physical activity at various times, including before school, recess, and after school. Currently, only half of schools allow students to access indoor facilities after school hours.
- provide a variety of facilities. Although facilities are available at most schools, rural schools are less likely to have access to some municipal facilities.
- provide promotional information on physical activity. Only 34% of schools make available information about physical activity to their physical education specialists.
- incorporate physical activity themes into other classes. Data reveals that most schools only demonstrate a low or moderate degree of support for integrating physical activity into broader school life.
- promote active commuting of students to and from school. Most schools (73%) do not have a policy to support active transportation of students to and from school.
- provide comprehensive health services that promote positive health behaviours. Seven in ten schools do not offer any health promotion programs (including supportive programs for healthy eating, seminars, and so on) for staff.
- ensure a healthy school environment by encouraging good nutrition and healthy eating among students.<sup>11</sup>
- provide adequate training for staff and volunteers who teach physical activity to students. Roughly 20% of schools provide ongoing professional development or certification to physical education specialists.
- encourage school personnel to also be physically active during recess, lunch hours, before and after school. These individuals are in an influential position to act as role models for appropriate physical activity behaviour.<sup>12</sup>

### **Creating partnerships with the community**

Support from various facets of the community play a very important role in supporting and maintaining the physical activity of children and youth now and in the transition period when they graduate from school. These can include partnerships or linkages with the facilities and programs available in the community (including parks and outdoor spaces, sports and recreation facilities, public and private facilities and programs for physical activity), local physical activity and sports organizations, private business, the health care sector, and with family members. For example,

- develop cooperative agreements between school boards and municipalities to share use of facilities and human resources. Over one-third of schools do not have, or do not know if they have a shared agreement with their municipalities.
- provide access to school facilities for groups participating in physical activity outside of school hours.
- ensure that the hours and location of community programming and facilities for physical activity are suitable and meet the needs of students.
- promote parental involvement in school physical activity functions
- provide education and interventions directed towards physical activity in the health care system.