



AVAILABILITY OF FACULTIES AT SCHOOL AND IN THE COMMUNITY FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Introduction

Attributes of the physical environment can influence the activity patterns of children and youth, and often, the environment can have a different effect for children than it does for adults. Research has shown that the availability of facilities which are supportive of physical activity in the neighbourhood, as well as the availability of equipment and structures in the school environment, are related to increases in physical activity levels. This section looks at the availability of facilities and infrastructure both at school itself, and at the existing relationships between the school and community for sharing of resources. The data are analyzed by region of school locale, student population size, and other school demographics such as setting, type, language and general income distribution of the students' families. The analyses also compare trend data over time where possible. This section also provides policy and program recommendations.

Large-scale facilities available for physical activity and sport

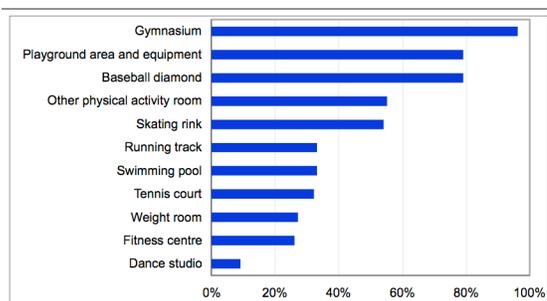
Gymnasiums are the most common large facility available to Canadian schools, with almost all schools (96%) reporting having access to one. The majority of schools also report having playground equipment (79%) and baseball diamonds (79%). Just over half (55%) indicate having some other physical activity room, and a similar proportion (54%) have access to a skating rink. About one-third of schools have access to a running track (33%), swimming pool (33%), or tennis court (32%). Slightly fewer indicate having a designated weight room (27%) or fitness centre available (26%) and only 9% have a dance studio.

Region There are generally few differences between regions in the likelihood of reporting availability of gymnasiums; however, schools in Newfoundland are slightly less likely than others to report this. Newfoundland and Ontario schools are less likely, whereas schools in Saskatchewan and British Columbia are more likely to indicate that they have areas with playground equipment available. Schools in Quebec and the Atlantic region are less likely than other schools to report having access to baseball diamonds, while schools in the West are more likely to report this. Ontario schools are less likely than others, while schools in Alberta, Saskatchewan and the North are more likely, to have access to skating rinks. Quebec schools are less likely than others to have running tracks available. Schools in Manitoba are less likely, whereas those in Alberta and British Columbia are more likely to have access to swimming pools. Schools in British Columbia and Saskatchewan are more likely than other schools to have access to tennis courts. Saskatchewan schools are also more likely to have access to designated weight rooms or fitness centres, as are schools in Newfoundland and Alberta.

Student Population Size Schools with fewer than 200 students are slightly less likely than larger schools to have access to gymnasiums, but are more likely to have access to areas with playground equipment. As student population size increases, so does the reported availability of running tracks, swimming pools, tennis courts, weight rooms or fitness centres, and dance studios.

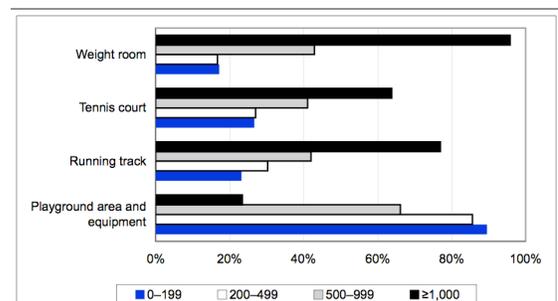
School Setting Urban schools are generally more likely than other schools to report having access to swimming pools, while rural schools are generally more likely to have playground equipment and skating rinks.

LARGE SCALE FACILITIES AVAILABLE
Overall trends, 2001-2006



2001 & 2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

LARGE SCALE FACILITIES AVAILABLE
By student population size



2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

Large-scale facilities available for physical activity and sport (cont'd)

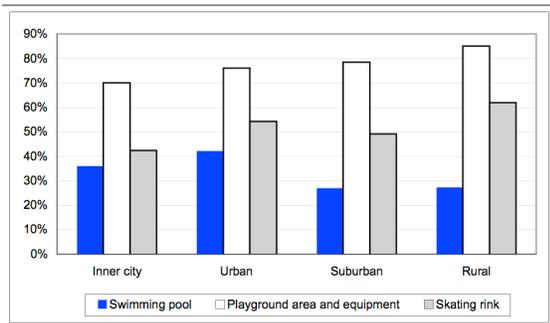
School Type High schools are more likely than middle schools, who in turn, are more likely than elementary schools to indicate the availability of other rooms for physical activity, a weight room, a fitness centre, and a running tracks. Similarly, high schools are more likely than elementary schools to say that they have access to dance studios, swimming pools, baseball diamonds, and tennis courts. Elementary schools, however, are more likely than middle and high schools to report that they have access to playground equipment. There are few differences between public and non-public schools in the reported availability of large scale facilities; however, non-public schools are more likely than public schools to have access to fitness centres.

Estimated Family Income Schools with higher proportions of students from low-income families are less likely than other schools to have access to baseball diamonds, skating rinks, running tracks, or tennis courts.

Language French schools are generally less likely to have access to baseball diamonds. French schools are also less likely than English schools to have access to other unspecified physical activity rooms and running tracks.

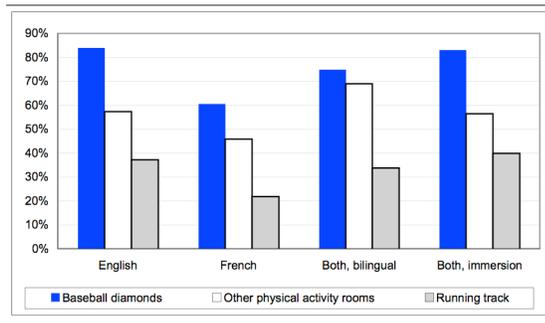
Trends There has been a decrease in the proportion of schools indicating access to baseball diamonds, skating rinks, running tracks, swimming pools, tennis courts, or weight rooms since 2001. There has been a slight increase in the proportion of schools that cite availability of other rooms for physical activity. The relationship with student population generally remains consistent over time; that is, schools with fewer than 200 students are less likely than larger schools to have access to gymnasiums and as student population size increases, there is increased availability of some types of facilities.

LARGE SCALE FACILITIES AVAILABLE
By school setting



2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

LARGE SCALE FACILITIES AVAILABLE
By language



2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

Smaller-scale facilities available for physical activity and sport

The majority of Canadian schools report having such smaller-investment physical activity resources as playing fields (92%), paved areas suitable for games like hopscotch (84%), and outdoor basketball hoops (82%). Significantly fewer indicate having weight equipment available (27%).

Region Schools in Newfoundland, Quebec and the North are less likely to have access to playing fields, whereas those in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia are more likely than other schools. Schools in Newfoundland are also less likely than others to have paved areas and outdoor basketball hoops.

Student Population Size Interestingly, the largest schools (those with 1,000 or more students) are generally less likely than others to have paved areas and outdoor basketball hoops, but are more likely to have playing fields. The largest schools are also more likely to have weight equipment, while schools with 499 students or fewer are much less likely to have weight equipment.

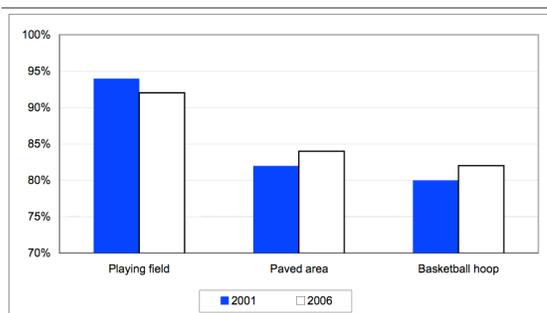
School Setting or Type There are no differences among inner city, urban, suburban, or rural schools, nor are there differences between public and non-public schools in availability of smaller scale facilities. However, middle and high schools are more likely than elementary schools to say that they have access to playing fields and outdoor basketball hoops, but are less likely to report access to paved areas.

Estimated Family Income Schools with predominantly lower income students are less likely to report the availability of playing fields compared to those schools with predominantly higher income students or schools with a mixture of students.

Language French schools are less likely than English schools to report having access to playing fields, while schools with a language of education other than English or French are less likely than English school to have a paved areas and outdoor basketball hoops. There are no significant differences in terms of language in having weight equipment available.

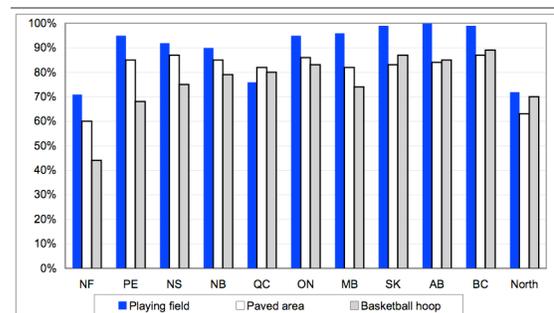
Trends There has been little change in proportion of schools indicating access to smaller scale facilities since 2001. The differences that appeared by school setting and with estimated family income that appeared in 2001 are not longer apparent in 2006.

SMALLER SCALE FACILITIES AVAILABLE
Overall trends, 2001-2006



2001 & 2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

SMALLER SCALE FACILITIES AVAILABLE
By region



2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

Amenities for physical activity

Three-quarters of Canadian schools reportedly have bicycle racks available for their students, and a similar proportion (74%) have change rooms. A smaller number report having showers (41%), and fewer still (35%) have lockers designated for physical activity.

Region Schools in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia are more likely, whereas schools in Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland are less likely than other schools to provide bicycle racks. Saskatchewan and British Columbia schools are more likely to have change rooms, and those in the North, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick are more likely than others to have showers. Saskatchewan, Alberta, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland schools are more likely, whereas those in Manitoba and Ontario are less likely to provide lockers.

Student Population Size Schools with 500 or more students are more likely than others to report having change rooms, showers, and designated lockers. There are no notable differences between the availability of bicycle racks and school population size.

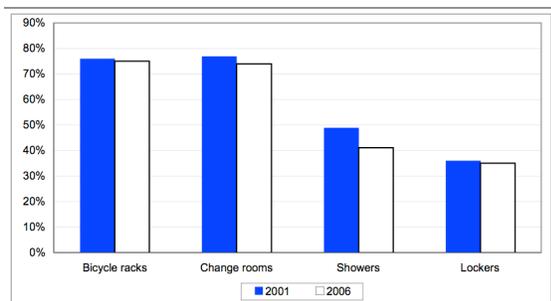
School Setting and Type There are no differences regarding the availability of amenities and school setting. However, middle and high schools are more likely than elementary schools to say that they have access to showers, change rooms and lockers.

Estimated Family Income Schools with predominantly students from high income families are more likely to have change rooms and bicycle racks available than those schools with predominantly lower income students.

Language French schools are less likely than English schools to have bicycle racks.

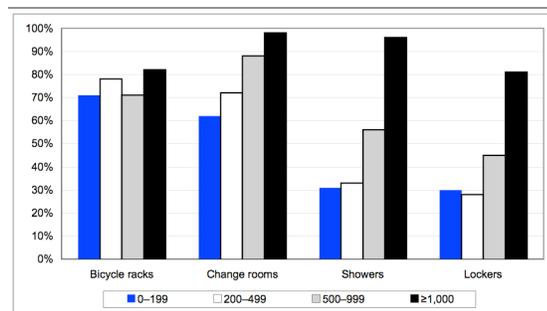
Trends The proportion of schools that indicate the availability of amenities for physical activity has generally remained the same over the past 5 years, with one exception. The proportion of schools reporting the availability of showers has decreased. Geographic location is still related to the provision of amenities, as an increasing proportion of schools cite the availability of bicycle racks from East to West. Larger schools and schools with larger proportions of higher income students remain more likely to report the availability of some amenities.

AMENITIES SUPPORTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
Overall trends, 2001-2006



2001 & 2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

AMENITIES SUPPORTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
By student population size



2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

Access to facilities for physical activity outside school hours

The majority of Canadian schools (91%) indicate that students are allowed to use their *outdoor* facilities for physical activity outside of school hours, while significantly fewer (56%) indicate that students may use their *indoor* facilities outside of school hours.

Region Schools in the Western provinces are more likely to report that students have access to their outdoor facilities outside of school hours, while schools in Quebec are less likely to report this. There appears, however, to be wider variation between regions in allowing students to use indoor facilities outside of school hours. Schools in the West, Atlantic, and North are more likely but schools in Quebec are less likely to indicate this.

Student Population Size and School Setting There are no significant differences in terms of school setting in reporting that students are able to use indoor or outdoor school facilities outside of school hours. Larger schools (more than 500 students) are more likely than the smallest schools to permit students to use indoor facilities outside of hours.

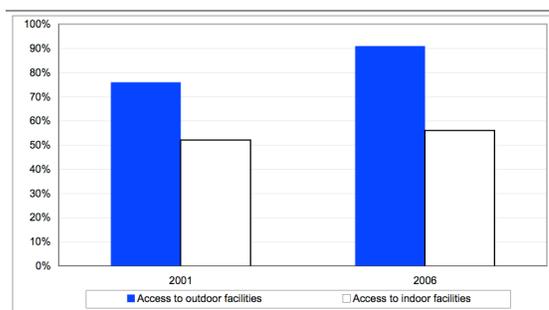
School Type Non-public schools are less likely than public schools to indicate that students can use their outdoor facilities outside of school hours.

Estimated Family Income Schools with more students from higher income families and schools with more students from lower income families are less likely to report that students are allowed to use their outdoor facilities outside of school hours compared to schools with an equal mixture of students from both income groups.

Language French schools are less likely than English schools to indicate that students may use their indoor and outdoor facilities outside of school hours.

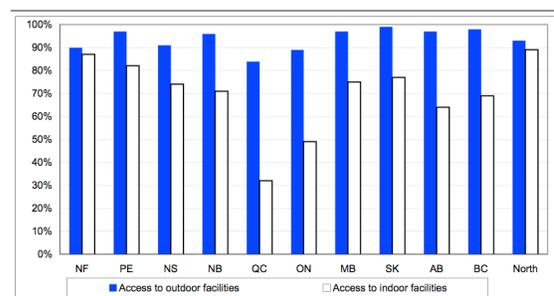
Trends There has been a substantial increase in the proportion of schools that permit access to outdoor facilities after school hours, and a smaller increase in the percentage that permit access to indoor facilities. Compared to 5 years ago, schools in Quebec are still less likely to permit access to indoor and outdoor facilities compared to the national average, Ontario schools are no longer less likely to report access to indoor facilities. Western schools are still more likely to allow access to outdoor facilities after school, and Atlantic and Northern schools are also now more likely than the average school to report this. Interestingly, 5 years ago, schools with larger population sizes were more likely to allow access to indoor facilities, however, there are now no apparent differences between schools of varying population sizes.

AFTER SCHOOL ACCESS FOR STUDENTS
Overall trends, 2001-2006



2001 & 2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

AFTER SCHOOL ACCESS FOR STUDENTS
By region



2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

Community resources for physical activity

Walking and bicycling trails are the most common community resource available to Canadian schools (63%), followed closely by municipal sport or recreation facilities (60%). Fewer schools (50%) report having community centres available.

Region Schools in the Quebec and Manitoba are less likely, whereas those in Prince Edward Island and British Columbia are more likely to have access to trails. Schools in British Columbia and the North are more likely, whereas those in Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia are less likely to cite access to community centres. Schools in the North and in British Columbia are more likely, whereas schools in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland are less likely to indicate having access to municipal sport or recreation facilities.

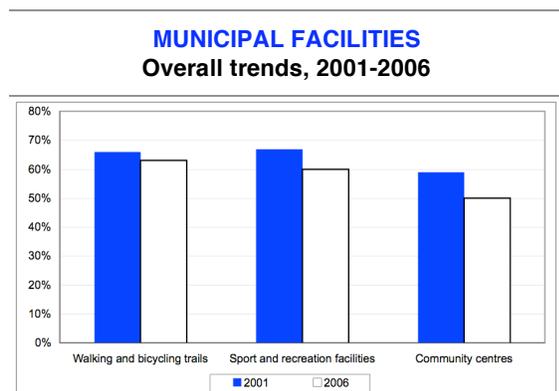
Student Population Size Canada's largest schools are significantly more likely to have access to trails, while its smallest schools are less likely to have such access. There are no notable differences in terms of student population in the reported availability of community centres.

School Setting or type There are no significant differences among inner-city, urban, suburban, rural or between public and non-public schools in the reported availability of community resources. High schools are more likely to report access to walking and bicycling trails compared to elementary schools.

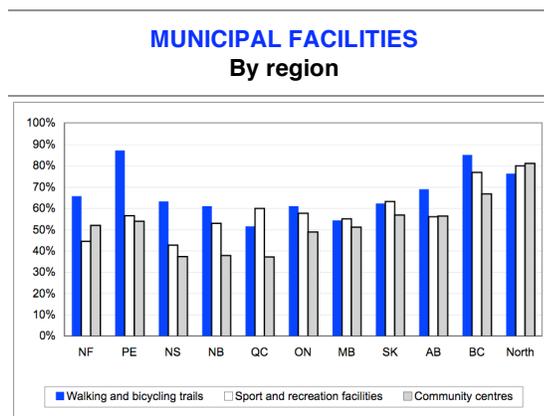
Estimated Family Income Schools with mostly students from high income families are more likely than those with primarily students from low income families to have trails available. There are no other significant differences in terms of family income.

Language French schools are less likely than English or bilingual schools to have trails available.

Trends Compared to 5 years ago, schools are less likely to report access to sport and recreation facilities and to community centres. Atlantic schools continue to be less likely to have access to sport and recreation facilities. Interestingly, where rural schools were less likely to have access to sport and recreation facilities and trails in 2001, these differences no longer appear.



2001 & 2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI



2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

Community consultation and shared use of facilities

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Canadian schools report that their school boards consult with local community groups when constructing new buildings. The majority of schools (84%) indicate that their school boards have agreements with community groups regarding the shared use of facilities.

Region Schools in the North are significantly more likely than others to report consulting with community groups when constructing new buildings and schools in Newfoundland are less likely to report having agreements with community groups regarding shared facility use.

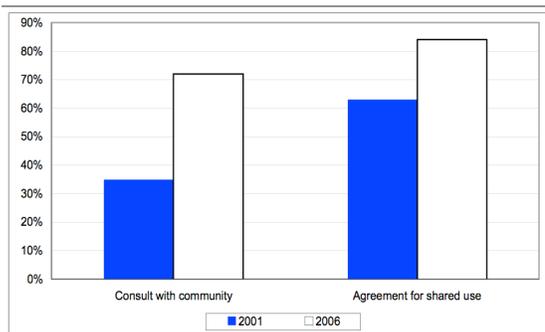
Student Population Size and school setting There are no significant differences in terms of student population size or school setting in reporting consulting with community groups when constructing new buildings or having agreements with community groups regarding shared facility use.

School Type There are no significant differences between public and non-public schools in consulting with local community groups when constructing new buildings; however, non-public schools are significantly less likely to report having agreements regarding the shared use of facilities. Elementary and middle schools are more likely than high schools to report that their school board consults with local groups when constructing new buildings.

Estimated Family Income There are no significant differences in terms of students' household incomes for schools reporting consulting with community groups when constructing new buildings or having agreements with community groups regarding the shared use of facilities.

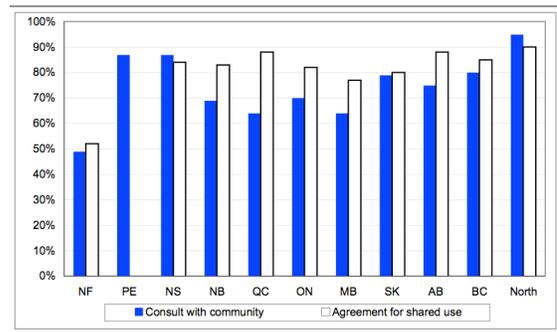
Trends The proportion of schools that indicate that there is an agreement between their school or board and the municipality to share facilities has increased in the past 5 years. Atlantic schools are still less likely than the average Canadian school to report the availability of such agreements. In 2001, schools with larger populations were more likely, whereas rural schools were less likely to state that such agreements existed. However, these differences no longer appear in 2006.

HAVE AGREEMENT FOR SHARED FACILITIES
Overall trends, 2001-2006



2001 & 2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

HAVE AGREEMENT FOR SHARED FACILITIES
By region



2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

Community access to school facilities

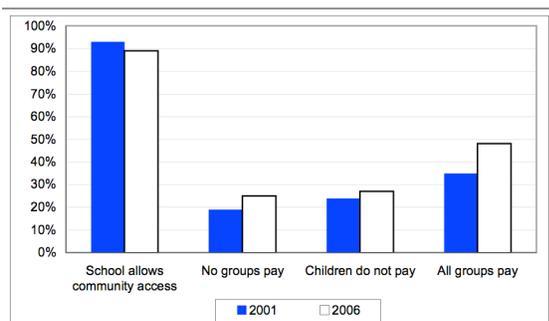
Most schools (89%) indicate that local community groups have access to their facilities outside of school hours. About 75% report that local groups pay user fees to access school facilities, with 27% indicating that only adult groups have to pay and 48% indicating that all groups have to pay. Relatively even proportions of schools indicate that liability concerns limit the kinds of physical activity that can be done at their schools *a great deal* (24%), *quite a bit* (22%), *somewhat* (28%), or *a little to not at all* (26%).

Region Schools in Newfoundland are less likely than others to report that community groups have access to school facilities outside of school hours. Schools in the North, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan are considerably more likely to report that no groups are required to pay user fees to access their facilities, whereas Newfoundland and New Brunswick schools are more likely to report that only adult groups have to pay, and Ontario schools are more likely, whereas those in Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Manitoba are less likely to report that *all* groups have to pay. While there are few differences between regions in terms of liability concerns, schools in Quebec are somewhat more likely to report that such concerns are only *a little* or *not at all* limiting.

Student Population Size Schools with fewer than 200 students are less likely than others to report that community groups have access to their facilities outside of school hours. Schools with fewer than 200 students are more likely to report that no groups have to pay to have access to their facilities, while schools with 500 or more students are more likely to report that all groups have to pay. There are no significant differences in terms of student population size in liability concerns.

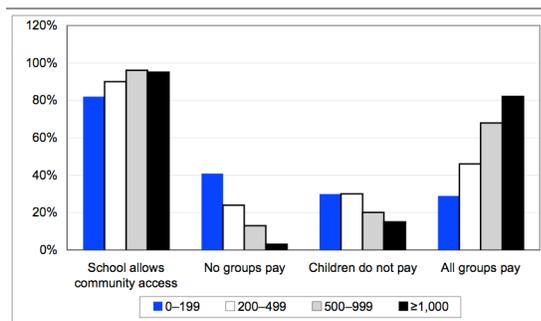
School Setting There are no significant differences among inner city, urban, suburban, or rural schools in reporting that community groups have access to their facilities outside of school hours, or liability concerns. However, urban and suburban schools are more likely to indicate that all community groups have to pay user fees to have access to their facilities, whereas rural schools are less likely to indicate this; in addition, rural schools are more likely to indicate that no groups, or only adult groups, have to pay user fees.

COMMUNITY ACCESS TO FACILITIES
Overall trends, 2001-2006



2001 & 2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

COMMUNITY ACCESS TO FACILITIES
By student population size



2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

Community access to school facilities (cont'd)

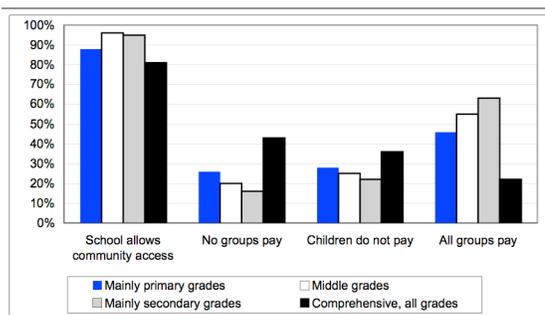
School Type There are no significant differences between public and non-public schools in reporting that community groups have to pay user fees to use their facilities, or liability concerns; however, non-public schools are less likely to report that community groups have access to their facilities outside of school hours. High schools are slightly more likely than elementary schools to say that local groups have access to facilities outside of school. High schools are also more likely than elementary schools to say that all groups have to pay user fees to access school facilities, whereas elementary schools are more likely to state that no groups have to pay.

Estimated Family Income There are no significant differences in terms of students' household incomes in schools reporting that community groups have access to their facilities outside of school hours, or in expressing liability concerns. Schools with mostly students from high income families are more likely than those with mostly students from lower income families to indicate that all community groups have to pay user fees to have access to their facilities.

Language French schools are more likely than English school to report that liability concerns are only *a little* or *not at all* limiting to the kinds of physical activity that can be done at their schools.

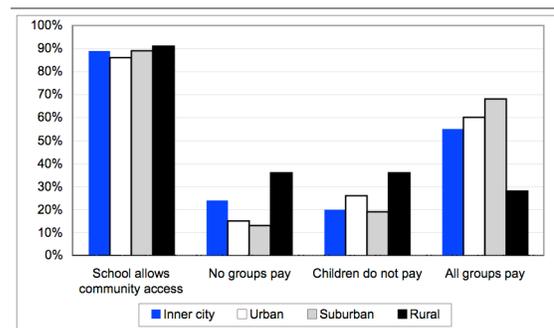
Trends There is a slight decrease in the proportion of schools that permit community groups or individuals to access school facilities compared to 5 years ago. Larger schools are still more likely to report that individuals have to pay for use of school facilities. Furthermore, public schools are still more likely to indicate that their facilities can be used by community groups or individuals. Rural schools continue to be less likely to make users pay for the use of the schools facilities.

COMMUNITY ACCESS TO FACILITIES
By school type



2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

COMMUNITY ACCESS TO FACILITIES
By school setting



2006 Survey of physical activity in Canadian schools, CFLRI

Summary and discussion of section

The resources a school makes available to its students can contribute significantly to their levels of physical activity. It is encouraging, then, that most Canadian schools offer a reasonable variety of resources to their students:

- More than 90% of schools have access to gymnasiums, playing fields, or permit access to their outdoor facilities outside of school hours;
- Between 80-90% have access to paved areas for games like hopscotch and outdoor basketball hoops;
- Between 70-80% of schools have access to areas with playground equipment, baseball diamonds, bicycle racks, and change rooms;
- Between 50-60% of schools have access to other physical activity rooms and skating rinks, and allow access to their indoor facilities outside of school hours.

There are, however, numerous resources which the majority of Canadian schools do not have as much access to:

- Between 30-41% of schools have access to showers, lockers designated for physical activity, running tracks, swimming pools and tennis courts;
- Roughly one-quarter of schools have access to weight equipment, weight rooms or fitness centres;
- Less than 10% have access dance studios.

The availability of certain amenities varies considerably by school demographics, as noted in Table 1 below.

Table 1: School characteristics associated with availability of physical activity amenities

		Region	School descriptors	Language of instruction	Change since 2001
Large-scale facilities	Baseball diamonds	West	High schools	English	Decrease in access
	Skating rinks	Alberta, Saskatchewan, North	Rural Smaller schools		Decrease in access
	Tennis courts	British Columbia, Saskatchewan	Larger schools High schools		Decrease in access
	Weight rooms	Alberta, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland	Larger schools Non-public High schools		Decrease in access
	Playground equipment	Saskatchewan, British Columbia	Rural Smallest schools Elementary schools		No change
	Gymnasiums		Urban Larger schools		
	Running tracks		Urban Larger schools	English	Decrease in access
	Swimming pools	Alberta, British Columbia	Urban Larger schools High schools		Decrease in access
	Dance studios		Larger schools High schools		
Smaller-scale facilities	Playing fields	Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia	Largest schools Middle and high schools More higher income or a mix of various income students	English	No change
	Paved areas				No change
	Outdoor basketball hoops		Middle and high schools		No change
	Weight equipment		Largest schools		No change
Amenities for physical activity	Bicycle racks	Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia	More high income students	English	No change
	Change rooms	British Columbia, Saskatchewan	Larger schools More high income students	English	No change
	Showers	Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, North	Larger schools Middle and high schools		Decreased availability
	Designated lockers	Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Newfoundland	Larger schools Middle and high schools	Bilingual	No change
Access to facilities outside of school hours	Outdoor access outside school hours	West	Public schools Mixed of students with various incomes	English	Increase in access
	Indoor access outside school hours	West, North, Atlantic	Larger schools	English	Increase in access
Community resources for physical activity	Walking and biking trails	Prince Edward Island, British Columbia	Largest schools High schools More high income students	English and bilingual schools	No change
	Sport and recreation facilities	British Columbia, North			Decrease in access
	Community centres	British Columbia, North			Decrease in access

Links to the surrounding community form an important component of a school's physical activity practices. According to the responses from Canadian schools, most seem to have established clear ties and routines with their communities:

- 89% allow community groups access to their facilities outside of school hours; of these, 75% report that local groups have to pay user fees for this access, with 27% indicating that only adult groups have to pay and 48% indicating that all groups have to pay;
- 84% have agreements with community groups regarding the shared use of facilities;
- 72% consult with local community groups when constructing new buildings; and,
- Between 50-65% of schools have community resources such as trails, municipal sport or recreation facilities or community centres, available.

Since 2001, there has been a decrease in the proportion of schools indicating access to baseball diamonds, skating rinks, running tracks, swimming pools, tennis courts, weight rooms, sport and recreation facilities and community centres. There has been a slight increase in the proportion of schools that state that other rooms for physical activity are available. Smaller schools and rural schools continue to be less likely to have access to some types of facilities but are also more likely not to charge user fees. Geographic location is still related to the provision of amenities and facilities, and accessibility to facilities. The decrease in the accessibility to certain municipal facilities over time is worrisome, as it creates a challenge for schools to provide a variety of activities and in particular for the provision of lifelong activities such as swimming, skating, tennis and the like.

Over the past 5 years, however, there has been a substantial increase in the proportion of schools that permit access to outdoor facilities after school hours, and a smaller increase in the percentage that permit access to indoor facilities. The proportion of schools that indicate that there is an agreement between their school or board and the municipality to share facilities has also increased in the past 5 years. However, during this same time period, there has been a slight decrease in the proportion of schools that permit community groups or individuals access to school facilities.

Discussion, Implications and Recommendations

Large-scale physical activity facilities to support physical education and team sports generally appear to be available to most schools in Canada. These facilities can be available on-site at the school, or can be available for school use off-site in the community. Access to facilities where students can develop skills for individual lifelong activities (i.e., skating, tennis) appears to be more limited, and this access has decreased over time. This is a particular worrisome finding, given that it is recommended that children be provided with a variety of physical activities. Such variety includes opportunities to experience activities and sports that are competitive, non-competitive, lifelong, individual and team. However, given decreases in school access to municipal facilities that support participation in these types of activities, will the facilities and programming available permit schools to carry out these recommendations?

The high percentages of reported access to facilities generally appears in larger schools, and corresponds to findings in a national survey of parents where 73% of Canadian parents indicate that their children's school makes use of local community facilities (such as community swimming pools, arenas, local ski hills, etc.) for physical activity programming at school.⁴ This appears to be more frequently reported by parents of adolescents than younger children. Moreover, parents from lower income households are less likely to report that their children's school makes use of community facilities. This is comparable to what schools themselves report, as data in this section show that schools where the majority of students are from low-income families are also less likely to have access to some larger scale facilities and trails.

In a review of the research examining school characteristics and children's physical activities, several studies have shown that availability and access to equipment and facilities during key times within the school day are important considerations.⁶ For example, researchers found that children of middle school age were more likely to be active during recess if there were more equipment for physical activity and more activity structures, such as basketball hoops.⁷ This activity was also further enhanced by adult supervision. Research shows that children spend much of recess being inactive.⁸ Providing more opportunities to be active during recess periods can potentially help increase activity levels of children. These opportunities can be increased through both policy and program initiatives which can include school policies for increasing the frequency of recess, providing active options at recess, providing physically active indoor activities when recess is cancelled due to weather conditions, and educating staff to prompt physical activity among students during this time. Schools can also encourage their personnel to be active during recess and lunch, and before and after school, as teachers are potentially in an influential position to act as role models for appropriate physical activity behaviour (see section entitled "Social climate and environment").⁹

Active commuting to and from school has the potential to contribute to overall physical activity levels of children and youth.^{10,11,12,13} The majority of Canadian children use inactive means of getting to and from school each day, and this proportion has increased over time.⁴ Studies have shown that children who do not walk to school are less likely to meet physical activity recommendations;¹⁴ children who walk to school at least once a week have higher activity levels than those who commuted by car;¹⁵ and that walking to school was related to more time spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity in a day.¹⁶ Generally speaking, the majority of schools indicate that they have bicycle racks and change rooms available. Just a little more than one-third have showers and lockers available. Although facilities to support active commuting generally appear to be available at school, other potential barriers such as parental concerns about safety, road hazards, traffic concerns, lack of infrastructure, lack of street connectivity, lack of controlled crossing,⁶ or inadequate maintenance of sidewalks and lanes must be considered and addressed. Programs currently exist in Canada and internationally to promote children's active commuting to and from school. Canada's "Active and Safe Routes to School",⁵ the United States' "Kids Walk-to-School",¹⁷ and the United Kingdom's "Safer Routes to School"¹⁸ programs are examples of initiatives addressing this opportunity for increasing activity levels among our young people. Schools can use and adapt such resources to help shift children's commuting choices to more active ones.

Research has demonstrated that teens are more active when equipment and access to facilities at school were available,¹⁹ and increases in children's physical activity with increase in playground markings, like hopscotch, games or basketball court markings.²⁰ Schools can ensure that the facilities available for physical education and other physical activity programming are safe, well-maintained, well-lit, and that physical activity structures adhere to current safety regulations. The available equipment and facilities not only have to be adequate in terms of availability and quantity, but they also need to support the needs of the students and be appropriate for the seasonal variation in weather patterns. Appropriate facilities or alternative programming need to be made available during the seasons when physical activity may decline. For example, schools can: make use of outdoor community rinks; make arrangements with local ski facilities; provide indoor training for team sports; and use hallways for walking clubs.²¹

Data from this section indicate that most schools allow students to use their outdoor facilities for physical activity outside of school hours, while a substantially lower proportion of schools allow students to use indoor facilities outside of school hours. Findings from a survey of Canadian parents found that most parents indicated that their children's schools offer physical activity programs outside of physical education, but almost two out of five of these parents report that these programs meet their children's needs very little or not at all. A study in Ontario secondary schools revealed that of the two-thirds of Ontario schools with intramural programs, only 15% of students participated in them.²² In addition, almost all schools offered inter-school sports but only one-quarter of students participated in them. These researchers found the supervision of intramurals and funding for inter-school sports programs were significant issues. Perhaps the lack of access to facilities outside of schools hours (i.e., after school) may also be a potential issue. In addition, a later topic in this report shows that only one out of ten schools report that they provide late bussing so that their students can participate in physical activity programs after school. The lack of supervision, financing, transportation and access to facilities are all potential contributors to lower activity levels among children and youth.

Data from this section reveal that most schools and school boards have agreements with community groups regarding the shared use of facilities. Similarly, most schools indicate that local community groups have access to their school's facilities outside of school hours. Although access is generally cited by most schools, the majority of schools indicate that local groups pay user fees for such access. Agreements that specify reduced registration, membership, or user fees in community facilities outside of school hours also can be considered. Such agreements can be at a local level, however, they can also be imposed at a provincial or territorial level. The Government of Ontario's \$20 million investment in making schools facilities more accessible for community groups is one example of this type of directive. Beyond shared agreements of facilities, schools can promote community-based physical activity opportunities through its communications vehicles with students, staff and parents.

In summary, most schools have access to the types of facilities that could enable them to offer a broad range of physical activity opportunities to children and youth through the school system. However, since 2001, access to municipal facilities that support lifelong physical activities through the school system appears to have been decreasing. Since

schools are important means of teaching physical skills and supporting involvement, the vast majority of children are inactive and less than 50% of teenagers meet even the minimum public health recommendation for adults, a comprehensive approach is required to create active school communities to effectively address these concerns.

