

August 7, 2013

Hon. Liz Sandals
Minister of Education
14th Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Sandals:

RE: Physical Literacy

The Chatham-Kent Board of Health oversees the delivery of mandatory health promotion and protection services for the Municipality of Chatham-Kent as outlined by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and in accordance with the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* of 1990.

Physical literacy is an important public health issue. Recent trends in childhood physical inactivity, sedentary behaviour, obesity and decreased fitness suggest that many children today lack the basic skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to live healthy, active lifestylesⁱ. The 2011 Canadian Health Measures Survey found that only 7% of Canadian children meet the minimal daily physical activity requirements they need to achieve health benefits and they spend an average of 8.6 hours or 62% of their waking hours each day being sedentaryⁱⁱ. Up to 15-39% of the seven top chronic diseases including heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, colon cancer, breast cancer, and hypertension are attributable to physical inactivity and the total economic burden of physical inactivity in Canada is estimated at \$6.8 billionⁱⁱⁱ. Locally, our rates of chronic disease that can be attributed to physical inactivity continue to rise and the number of people who are obese has surpassed those who are overweight for the first time in history.

To ensure the healthy development of the whole child, physical literacy should be given the same attention as currently focused on literacy and numeracy. Given the time children spend in childcare and educational settings, the Ministry of Education has a vital role to play in ensuring the development of physical literacy in children and youth and must ensure these environments are conducive to physical literacy development.

As defined in the revised Ontario elementary curriculum:

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

Physically literate individuals consistently develop the motivation and ability to understand, communicate, apply, and analyze different forms of movement. They are able to demonstrate a variety of movements confidently, competently, creatively, and strategically across a wide range of health-related physical activities. These skills enable individuals to make healthy, active choices throughout their life span that are both beneficial to and respectful of themselves, others, and their environment.

J. Mandigo, N. Francis, K. Lodewyk, and R. Lopez, "Physical Literacy for Educators", *Physical and Health Education Journal* 75, no. 3 (2009): 27–30.

Physical literacy, including the acquisition of fundamental movement skills, knowledge, and physical activity behavior is essential for optimal growth and development and lays the foundation for an active life. There is the assumption that children naturally develop fundamental movement skills but research has shown this is not the case. Not competently being able to perform just one fundamental movement skill can seriously restrict future opportunities in physical activity, sport, and recreation. Furthermore, without physical literacy, many children and youth avoid or withdraw from physical activity and sport and may turn to sedentary or unhealthy lifestyle choices^{iv}.

Aside from the physical health benefits, physical literacy and participation in regular physical activity have been directly correlated to improved academic performance^v, positive self-concept, psychological well-being, reduced anxiety, depression^{vi} and behavioural issues^{vii}.

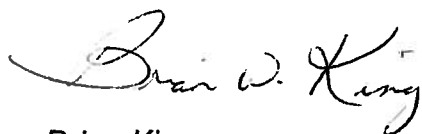
We acknowledge that the Ministry of Education has identified physical literacy as a main goal of the revised elementary Health and Physical Education Curriculum however a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the delivery of high quality instruction, programs and evaluation at both the elementary and secondary levels. To both accomplish the Ministry's goal as set forth in the revised curriculum and ensure that Ontario children obtain the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to live active, healthy, and productive lives, the Chatham-Kent Board of Health strongly encourages the Ministry of Education to adopt the following policy recommendations as identified by the Ontario Society of Physical Activity Promoters in Public Health (OSPAPPH):

- Adopt a mandatory assessment of physical literacy for elementary and secondary students across the province;
- Ensure quality, daily health and physical education programming is delivered by health and physical education specialists in all Ontario elementary and secondary schools;
- Evaluate compliance and enforce the Daily Physical Activity (Policy/Program Memorandum No. 138) requirement;

- Provide ongoing staff training related to physical literacy for all teachers, early childhood educators, and childcare providers;
- Strengthen the *Day Nurseries Act* to promote and support physical literacy development in licensed childcare settings, and
- Make health and physical education credits a mandatory requirement for grades 9-12.

Adopting these recommendations will enhance the delivery of a health and physical education curriculum that focuses on physical literacy, demonstrating the Ministry of Education's commitment to the development of the whole child and laying the foundation for healthy schools and a healthier Ontario.

Sincerely,



Brian King
Chair,
Chatham-Kent Board of Health

ⁱ Tremblay, M and Lloyd, M (2010). Physical Literacy Measurement – The Missing Piece, *Physical and Health Education Journal*, 76(1), 26-30

ⁱⁱ Statistics Canada (2011). Canadian Health Measures Survey: Physical activity of youth and adults. Retrieved from www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/110119/dq110119b-eng.htm

ⁱⁱⁱ Ian Janssen (2012). Health Care Costs of Physical Inactivity in Canadian Adults, *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*, 37 (4): 803-806

^{iv} Canadian Sport for Life (n.d.). Developing physical literacy – A guide for parents of children ages 0-12. Retrieved from Canadian Sport for Life (n.d.). Developing physical literacy – A guide for parents of children ages 0-12. Retrieved from <http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca/sites/default/files/resources/Developing%20Physical%20Literacy.pdf>

^v Sattelmair, J., & Ratey, J. (2009). Physically Active Play and Cognition An Academic Matter? *American Journal of PLAY*, 1, 365 – 374

^{vi} Healthy Active Living and Sports Medicine Committee Canadian Paediatric Society (2012). Position Statement - Healthy active living: Physical activity guidelines for children and adolescents. *Paediatric Child Health*, 17(4), 209-10

^{vii} Active Healthy Kids Canada (2009). Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth: Active kids are fit to learn. Retrieved from http://dvqdas9jty7g6.cloudfront.net/reportcard2009/ahkc-longform_web_final.pdf

