

HPE Curriculum Revisions

Statement by the Ontario Principals' Council

August 23, 2019

Over the past year, the Ministry of Education has consulted extensively on revisions to the Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum. The Ontario Principals' Council is pleased to see that a revised curriculum has finally been released that will be available for our students for the 2019-20 academic year.

Some components have been added to, or updated in, the curriculum including mental health literacy, consent, cyber bullying, online safety, concussion safety and substance abuse. We believe these are all positive additions and support their inclusion.

However, we are concerned about some aspects of the revision:

- The teaching of gender diversity has been delayed until grade 8, which we believe is too late. Students are aware of, talking about and living with issues of gender identity long before grade 8. Principals and school staff already assist elementary students who have struggled with their identity. To support those students, ensure their peers develop understanding and empathy about it and to create safe and inclusive environments, all students should be learning about this important topic from trained educators at a much earlier age.
- While we respect the right of parents to monitor their child's education, all students should be taught about issues related to human development and sexual health. Allowing students to be exempted from this learning will result in a lack of knowledge and understanding for these students, which we believe is crucial to their personal safety, health and wellness for the remainder of their lives.
- Schools do not have the human resources to supervise students whose parents request exemption from certain classes with the expectation that the student will remain at school. Teachers already have full schedules and EAs are assigned to work with our special needs students. There are simply not enough trained adults in schools to safely monitor, supervise or instruct young children who are not in their regular classrooms. This would require ad-hoc timetable re-scheduling and reallocation of staff responsibilities, additional pressure on common areas such as gyms and libraries and is likely to exceed prescribed and available supervision minutes. If parents decide they want their children exempted from certain lessons, parents should be responsible for the safety, supervision and instruction of their children during that time, or alternatively

agree that their children may remain in their classroom engaged in alternative programming. We simply do not have the human and school resources to provide an alternative space for these children to be supervised.

We will be reviewing the full documents in more detail in the coming weeks to determine how, and to what extent, they will impact our students and look forward to engaging directly with the Minister to discuss these and any further issues with a view to finding workable solutions that support students.