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Healthy Schools Condition Healthy Minds

October 06, 2005
[Education](#)

Toronto Maple Leafs Join Education Minister To Launch Minimum of 20 Minutes Of Daily Physical Activity For All Elementary Students TORONTO, Oct. 6 - Ontario's elementary students will be dancing, jumping, walking, and leaping their way to improved fitness and student achievement this year, Education Minister Gerard Kennedy said today. "This school year, every elementary student will take part in a minimum of 20 minutes of daily physical activity as part of our overall Healthy Schools Program," said Kennedy. "The plan also includes the return of specialist physical education teachers, the removal of junk food from vending machines and the opening up of our schools for community use after-hours." After years of cuts to essential programs, the education system is being reinvigorated. For the first time, at least 20 minutes of daily physical activity will become a mandatory component of the elementary curriculum. Daily physical activity will support existing physical education classes that typically take place twice or three times a week for 30 to 40 minutes for elementary students. Daily physical activity is part of the government's Healthy Schools Program, which to date includes: - \$39 million this year, increasing to \$146 million by 2008-09, to hire 2,000 new elementary specialist teachers in key areas such as physical education, literacy and numeracy, music and the arts. Six hundred specialist teachers are in place this school year - Directing school boards to remove all junk food from vending machines in elementary schools and replace it with healthier food and beverage choices. The guidelines provided to school boards are based on expert research and recommendations provided by the Dietitians of Canada and give clear guidance about which foods are appropriate, nutritious choices for children - All of Ontario's 72 district school boards have signed agreements to reduce or eliminate user fees, opening up schools to non-profit community groups for use after hours and year-round. This is part of a \$20 million investment annually and new agreements will be signed for each school year - \$10.7 million for training, resources and implementation of daily physical activity. Education Minister Gerard Kennedy was joined by Minister of Health Promotion Jim Watson, Minister of Economic Development and Trade Joseph Cordiano, Toronto Maple Leaf Centre Matt Stajan and Left Winger Chad Kilger and Paralympian Jeff Adams. "Participating in sports and doing daily physical activity is an important part of growing up healthy and doing well in school," said Stajan. "Research shows that students who engage in daily physical activity demonstrate improved academic performance," said Kennedy. "Our schools need to be in the business of helping students reach their full intellectual, emotional and physical potential." A study quoted in the Canadian Journal of Public Health says academic performance is maintained or even enhanced by an increase in a student's level of physical activity. In addition, a Saskatchewan study showed that regular participation in physical education and physical activity improves self- esteem, which is related to better academic achievement. "Between 1981 and 1996, the number of obese children in Canada between the ages of seven and 13 tripled," said Watson. "Healthy Schools is part of an overall approach to help Ontarians stay healthy, which includes Active 2010, the government's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy." "There is clear evidence the heart healthy habits we develop in childhood, are likely to follow us into adulthood," said Rocco Rossi, Chief Executive Officer, Heart and Stroke Foundation. "Encouraging physical activity among today's youth, as well as maintaining a healthy diet, can help keep this population safe from cardiovascular disease in the future." Disponible en français. www.edu.gov.on.ca www.resultsontario.gov.on.ca

Backgrounder ----- MAKING ONTARIO SCHOOLS HEALTHIER PLACES TO LEARN

Every Student Deserves The Opportunity To Enjoy Regular Physical Activity, Appreciate A Healthy Lifestyle And Have Access To A Full Range Of Extracurricular Activities. After years of cuts to essential and enriched programs, the education system is being reinvigorated. For the first time, a minimum of 20 minutes of daily physical activity will become a mandatory component of the elementary curriculum. A minimum of 20 minutes of daily physical activity is an important part of the Ontario government's plan to make publicly funded schools healthier places to learn and improve student achievement. This step in the Healthy Schools Program will ensure that all elementary students, including those with special needs, have a minimum of 20 minutes of sustained moderate to vigorous physical activity each school day during instructional time. The 20 minutes will be phased-in over the course of the school year starting this fall. Healthy Schools Program Daily physical activity is one component of the government's comprehensive Healthy Schools Program. To date, the program includes: - Investing \$39 million this year, increasing to \$146 million by 2008-09, to hire 2,000 new elementary specialist teachers in key areas such

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"As front-line school leaders, principals see the impact of poor nutrition and physical inactivity every day. Encouraging children to take part in exercise on a daily basis will, we believe, lead to less absenteeism due to illness, a more productive school setting, more active participation in school and better learning results." Ian McFarlane, President, Ontario Principals' Council ----- On average, Ontarians age two and up spend almost 21 hours a week watching television. Most full time elementary students, during a regular school week, spend no less than 25 hours a week in school. A study quoted in the Canadian Journal of Public Health says academic performance is maintained or even enhanced by an increase in a student's level of physical activity. In addition, a Saskatchewan study showed that regular participation in physical education and physical activity improves self-esteem, which is related to better academic achievement. As part of the government's comprehensive plan to make schools healthier places to learn, school boards are phasing-in daily physical activity. Teachers will have access to a variety of resources created in partnership with the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association. Schools are also encouraged to partner with community groups to help their students become more active. ----- Daily physical activity is not only important for our students' health, but it's also a key factor in student achievement and reducing behavioural issues. Elio Antunes, Executive Director, Ontario Physical and Health Education Association ----- Disponible en français www.edu.gov.on.ca For further information: Amanda Alvaro, Minister's Office, (416) 325-2632; Wilma Davis, Communications Branch, (416) 325-6730; Public Inquiries: (416) 325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514; TTY: 1-800-263-2892

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