Introduction to Physical and Health Education

The Physical and Health Education (PHE) curriculum aims to have students develop a personalized understanding of what healthy living means to them as individuals and members of society in the 21st century. The PHE curriculum focuses on well-being and, specifically, the connections between physical, emotional and mental health. Aligned with jurisdictions across Canada and throughout the world, this approach promotes a deeper and more holistic understanding of overall health and well-being in students.

PHE is designed to develop the knowledge, skills, and understandings that students need for lifelong physical health and mental well-being. The PHE curriculum highlights the connections between an individual’s health and his or her well-being; the connections between physical and mental health; the importance of positive interpersonal relations; and how interactions with the community affect overall well-being. As well, the curriculum aims to develop students who have the knowledge and confidence to promote their health and well-being by maintaining healthy habits. The goal is for students to recognize and change unhealthy behaviours and, at the same time, advocate for the safety, health, and well-being of others.

The Rationale and Goals justify the combining of physical and health education as a means to promote and develop all aspects of well-being. The importance of personal well-being, where students develop healthy habits, is identified as one of the principles of the educational transformation. This establishes PHE as essential to a complete education for British Columbia’s students.

Features of the Physical and Health Education curriculum

Flexible teaching and learning
The redesigned PHE curriculum promotes flexibility for teachers, allowing them to create learning experiences that are contextually relevant to their students’ needs, interests, and passions. Teachers use their professional autonomy when considering where (at school, in the community) to teach their students and the amount of time spent on each aspect of the curriculum.

Application to personal lifestyle
The curriculum addresses the uniqueness of each student. Students can apply the knowledge, processes, and skills learned to their daily lives while engaging in an exploration of what healthy living means and looks like for them. The curriculum facilitates a deep understanding of both physical and health literacy, providing students with the theoretical and practical foundations they need to follow their passions and embrace a healthy, active lifestyle.
Comprehensive focus
The curriculum unites two curricular areas — physical education and health education — into one concentrated area of learning to provide a comprehensive focus on healthy living for students. Although blended, physical and health education maintain their core attributes and qualities while supporting the development of a deeper understanding of their interconnectedness.

Collaboration and networking opportunities
With the curriculum’s scope and flexibility, there are many opportunities to explore potential networking and collaboration partnerships between teachers, with parents, and with local health authorities and others who might support the learning experiences for students and build stronger connections between the school and community.

Emphasis on connection to self, peers, and the community
Learning how people influence and are influenced by others promotes an understanding of who we are and how we function in society. With these emphases, the curriculum extends the learning beyond the walls of the school to connect with the lives of students in ways that are authentic and meaningful to them.

Design of the Physical and Health Education curriculum
The PHE curriculum has the same format as all other learning areas and is based on the Know-Do-Understand model of learning. The four key features of the curriculum design are the Content, Curricular Competencies, Big Ideas and Elaborations. More information about this model is available at www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca.

Content
The Content learning standards reflect the “Know” component of the learning model, and identify what students will learn about at each grade level. In addition to being rich in information, the Content acts as a supporting structure intended to assist students in demonstrating the Curricular Competencies that lead them to the Big Ideas.

Curricular Competencies
Curricular Competencies are action-based statements that identify what students will do to demonstrate their learning — the “Do” component of the learning model. The Curricular Competencies have been written to promote as much flexibility and creativity as possible, enabling students to demonstrate their learning in multiple ways. The examples of Curricular Competencies below show the development of students’ healthy-living goals as they progress through the grades.
The Curricular Competencies are linked to the Core Competencies — Communication, Thinking, and Personal and Social. The Personal and Social core competency is especially relevant to the PHE curriculum. The Core Competencies also support the development of habits of mind (e.g., persisting in tasks and goals, managing impulses and emotions) that are important in the development of Curricular Competencies.

**Big Ideas**

The Big Ideas represent what students are expected to understand as a result of their learning — the “Understand” component of the learning model. Collectively, the Big Ideas progress in both sophistication and degree of connection to the lives of students through the curriculum. The Big Idea examples below show how students’ understanding of well-being and physical activity develop as they progress through the grades.

**Elaborations**

Throughout the K–9 curriculum, Elaborations (included as hyperlinks) have been added to support the Content and Curricular Competencies in the form of examples, definitions, brief explanations, and inquiry questions.
Important Considerations

Alternative Delivery policy
The Alternative Delivery policy outlines how students and their parents or guardians, in consultation with their local school authority, may choose means other than instruction by a teacher within the regular classroom setting for addressing learning standards contained in the PHE curriculum.

The policy recognizes the family as the primary educator in the development of children’s attitudes, standards, and values, but it still requires that all prescribed learning standards be addressed and assessed in the agreed-upon alternative manner of delivery.

It is important to note the significance of the term “alternative delivery” as it relates to the Alternative Delivery policy. The policy does not permit schools to avoid addressing or assessing any of the prescribed learning standards within the PHE curriculum. Neither does it allow students to be excused from meeting any learning standards related to health. It is expected that students who arrange for alternative delivery will address the health-related learning standards and will be able to demonstrate their understanding of these standards.

The Alternative Delivery policy applies only to the health-related learning standards. (Policy to be updated.)

Safety considerations
Teachers should keep the following safety guidelines in mind and develop procedures to prevent or minimize incidents and injuries. In a safe learning environment, the teacher will:

- consider safety as a key consideration in planning and organizing for learning
- stay up-to-date on safety information
- ensure that students are familiar with safety rules and guidelines, remind students of them, and monitor to ensure that students observe them
- have a plan in case of emergency
- ensure that students are aware of procedures for responding to emergencies

By planning for safe learning environments and choosing age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate activities, teachers can reduce risk and guard against injury.

Inclusion, equity, and accessibility for all learners
British Columbia’s schools have students with varied backgrounds, interests, and abilities. The Kindergarten to Grade 12 school system is committed to meeting the needs of all students. When selecting specific topics, activities, and resources to support the implementation of the PHE curriculum, teachers are encouraged to ensure that these choices support inclusion, equity, and accessibility for all students. In particular, teachers should ensure that classroom instruction, assessment, and resources reflect sensitivity to diversity and incorporate positive role portrayals, relevant issues, and themes such as inclusion, respect, and acceptance.

Government policy supports the principles of integration and inclusion of students who have English as a second language and of students with special needs. Some standards may require adaptations to ensure that English Language Learners and those with special needs can successfully achieve the prescribed learning standards.
Some students with special needs may require program adaptation or modification to facilitate their achievement of the learning standards in the PHE curriculum.

**Adapted programs**

An adapted program addresses the prescribed learning standards of the curriculum but provides adaptations to selected learning standards. Adaptations may include alternative formats for resources, instructional strategies, and assessment procedures.

Adaptations may also be made in areas such as skill sequence, pacing, methodology, materials, technology, equipment, services, and setting. Students with adapted programs are assessed using the curriculum standards and can receive full credit.

The following are examples of strategies that may help students with special needs succeed:

- Adapt the task by simplifying or substituting skills, maintaining the integrity of the intended activity/outcome.
- Adapt the task by changing its complexity.
- Adapt the rules and scoring systems (e.g., allow kicking instead of throwing).
- Adapt the equipment (e.g., smaller, softer, or lighter equipment) or the setting (indoors instead of outdoors).
- Provide opportunities for more practice, extra time, or extension of learning.
- Adapt evaluation criteria to accommodate individual student needs.
- Adapt the number of activities the student is expected to complete.
- Increase the amount of learning assistance.
- Adapt the expectation of how a student is to respond to the instruction.
- Adapt the extent to which a student is actively involved in the activity.

**Modified programs**

A modified program has learning standards that are substantially different from those in the curriculum and have been specifically selected to meet the student’s special needs. A student with a modified program is assessed in relation to the goals and objectives established in the student’s IEP.

The following are examples of strategies that may help students on modified programs:

- Specify personal support (e.g., by peers or teacher assistants).
- Set individualized goals that consider prescribed outcomes but are developed to suit the student’s special needs.
- Modify activities by providing parallel ones for students with unique needs.
Establishing healthy learning environments

The learning spaces for PHE are many, including the schoolyard, community centres, fields and trails, and various other outdoor places. Teaching students to appreciate and respect the environment is an integral part of being active in these spaces.

Teachers may look for ways to connect learning in physical and health education with other provincially prescribed curricula. There are many natural connections, such as:

- English Language Arts — communicating ideas and viewpoints about healthy living topics
- Mathematics — calculating heart rate, using daily physical activity time in calculations
- Social Studies — group processes and teamwork, leadership, and rights and responsibilities at home, at school, and in the community
- Science — human body systems; appreciating the value of fresh air and outdoor spaces
- Environmental Studies — understanding the implications of human impacts on the environment (e.g., through various food choices, the use of trails) and health risks associated with sun exposure and air pollution

Whatever the approach used to facilitate connections among these subject areas, it is important to maintain the integrity of each discipline.

For additional support related to fostering a supportive learning environment for PHE, teachers may wish to consult the BC Performance Standards — Social Responsibility.