

CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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1.1 Definition of Physical Education

A Curriculum Framework for Physical Education: Adjusting the Focus builds on the belief that learners in a school setting have a fundamental need and desire for movement. This framework defines **Physical Education as that part of the educational experience which provides learners with the opportunity to become aware of and engage in physical activity that is whole-bodied, intrinsically valuable and personally meaningful within the context of the learners' social and environmental setting.**

1.2 Mission Statement for Physical Education

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Delivery of Programs and Services in Primary, Elementary, Secondary Education views the purpose of education as being inherently linked to the curriculum:

Of all the components of the educational system, the curriculum affects students most directly.... It reinforces social values, stimulates new thinking, prepares them to become participants in society, and helps them gain a critical awareness of their heritage, traditions and environment. It is through the curriculum that students come to know the forms of established disciplines, to become effective communicators and to learn the other skills they will need to confront and reshape the world they encounter.
(p. 295)

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Physical Education fosters personal and community wellness by empowering students to attain healthy, lifelong attitudes and behaviours through physical activity as part of the total educational experience.

This mission is based on a Vision that sees:

Teachers of physical education working collaboratively to ensure that every learner attains personal wellness through planned, culturally and environmentally sensitive, daily physical activity.

Where there is no vision, people perish.

Proverbs 29:18

1.3 The Dimensions of Physical Education

The term "physical education" evolved from the more restrictive phrase, 'physical training', which has been in use in North America since the turn of the 20th century. Physical education denotes that the subject is a bona fide field of study in the public school system. The subject matter of physical education is **human movement**. This content distinguishes physical education as a critical and essential component of school curricula. Physical education, as a school subject, is directed toward understanding human movement, including the human and environmental factors that affect and are affected by movement. The ways in which people use this ability is related to other aspects of their functioning as whole persons.

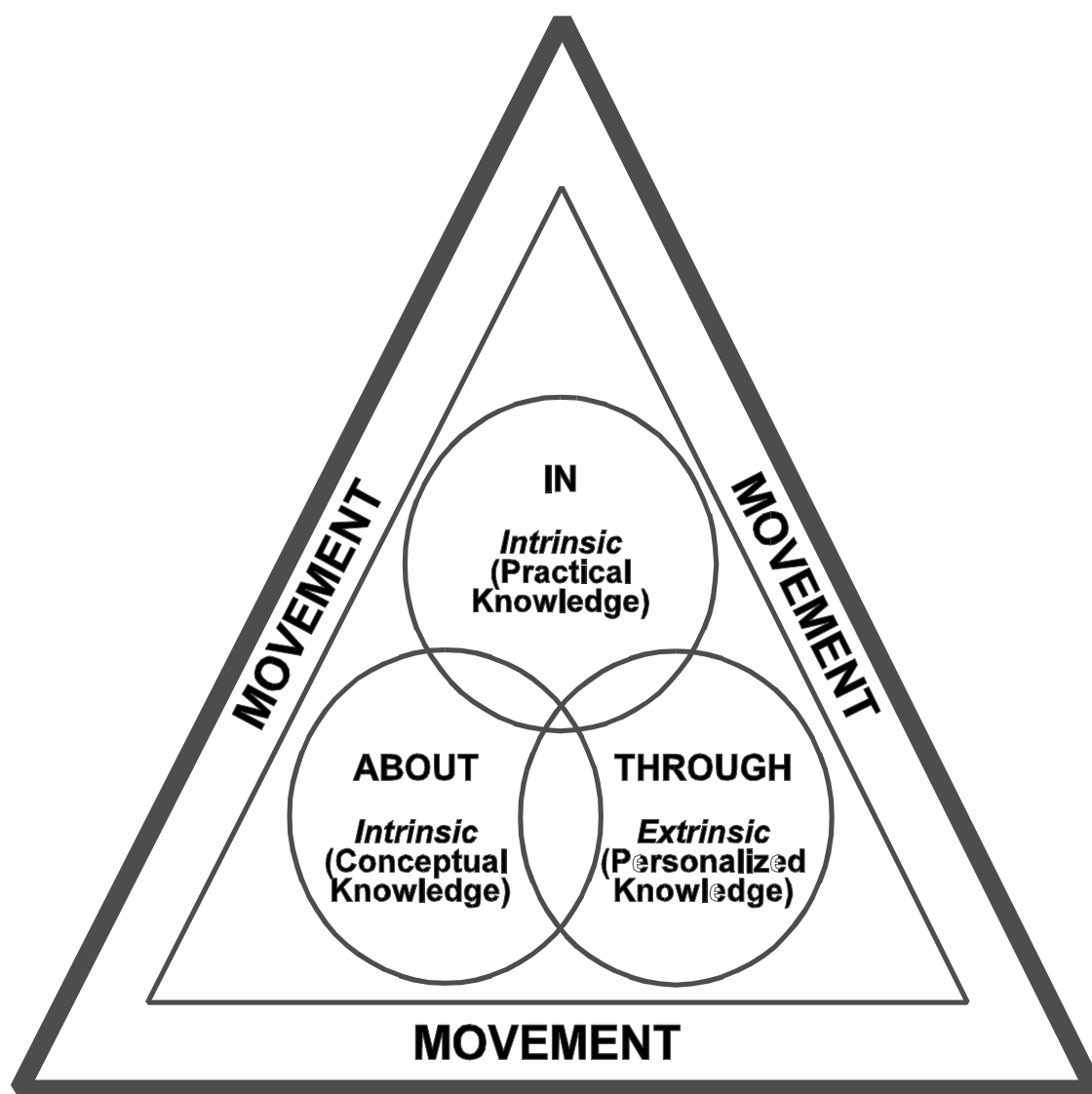
Human movement can be viewed in three dimensions:

1. Education **about** movement involves the cognitive processes that are concerned with learning concepts, rules and procedures ranging from simple spontaneous movements to complex structured movements. Learners may draw upon games, sport, athletics, swimming, rhythmic and dance, and outdoor pursuits in combination with other disciplines such as anatomy, physiology, physics, psychology, or aesthetics to conduct study and inquiry. At the primary or elementary level, the theme of 'movement' might take on a project with references to pastimes and games. This may be conducted within a physical education unit or integrated with other subjects. Movement concepts such as running, jumping, throwing, catching, turning and twisting might be introduced, observed and practiced. At the intermediate and senior high levels, knowledge **about** movement may be broken down into specialty areas (anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, movement as culture, history of games) or integrated with other subjects. Education **about** movement is confined to the transmission and transaction of 'movement' knowledge.
2. Education **through** movement is concerned with the affective contribution of movement as a means to an end. In this dimension, movement is used to achieve outcomes such as moral values and conduct, aesthetic understanding and appreciation, social interaction and socialization, or the use of leisure time that may be extrinsic to any specific activity.
3. Education **in** movement is concerned with the qualities that are an inherent part of movement itself. In this dimension, movement provides an opportunity to participate in activities that are intrinsically valuable, holistic, culturally significant, and an important source of personal meaning and knowledge. Education **in** movement has to do with **knowing how** to move, engaging in physical activities

and having a direct, lived-body experience with movement that is intrinsic to any particular physical activity. While education **in** movement emphasizes the learner-as-mover, it relates to and draws upon the other dimensions at different times and in varying degrees according to the situation and setting. It is here, in **movement**, when the three dimensions meet, that education as transformation can take place in physical education.

(Adapted from Arnold, 1985, 1988)

Figure 1: A Three Dimensional Model of the Movement Curriculum



Viewed within these three dimensions, physical education is a form of human knowledge ***in and about movement*** that emphasizes content and process (the what and how of education).

Through movement, learners can strive to achieve physical education outcomes that foster citizenship. All three dimensions are inter-connected (Arnold, 1988; Bain, 1988; Kirk, 1988) to encompass the entire physical activity experience that embraces the Canadian **cultural trademark¹ of Active Living**. Physical education, as a school subject, contributes to the promotion and building of Active Living Schools and Communities.

Authentic physical education means the use of physical activity as a medium in, through and about which students are informed and their minds opened.

(Kirk, 1988)

1.4 Rationale for Physical Education

The need for children and youth to engage in regular physical activity as a prerequisite for achieving optimum health has long been recognized. Regular physical activity results in mental and physical well-being. The best documented evidence indicates that:

1. Active children have more positive attitudes toward physical activity, school and themselves, and academic performance improves significantly.
2. Children who participate in regular positive physical activity programs, especially aerobic activities, have a more positive self-concept and develop high levels of self-

¹ One of Health Canada's long-term goals is to instill “Active Living” as a **cultural trademark** in the identity of Canadians.

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esteem. They exhibit better concentration, show improvements in discipline, and are less aggressive.

3. Regular physical activity can alleviate stress as well as teach children how to recognize and prevent stress.
4. Regular physical activity is positively related to muscle strength, size and endurance.
5. Regular physical activity generally results in an increase in lean body mass and a decrease in body fat, without any significant change in body weight.
6. Regular physical activity, started in childhood, can increase the peak bone mass of early adulthood, and delay the onset of osteoporosis (bone loss).
7. Active and fit children have lower levels of triglycerides and higher HDL-cholesterol to total cholesterol ratios than less active children.
8. Active lifestyles are associated with an improvement of eating habits and with a decline in substance abuse such as smoking and drinking.
9. Physical exercise can result in additional years of life expectancy.

Source: Research Notes - Active Living Alliance for Children and Youth; Physical Activity and the Child: Review & Synthesis ; Simons-Morton et al. (1987).

Eighty-five percent of participants in Youth Focus Groups firmly agree with the importance of daily physical activity.

(Canadian Youth Foundation, 1990)

Students who are comfortable with their bodies tend to exhibit a general boost in confidence and soon become more willing to take risks in other areas of school life, including their academic studies.

(Bill Green, Principal, 1992)

According to the Gallup National Omnibus Physical Activity Study (1989), 94% of adult Canadians said that physical education in schools was important, while 67% thought it was very important. Over half (51.8%) felt that the subject was as important as subjects such as mathematics and reading. The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute states that, despite this widespread acceptance and support, quality physical education is not perceived as a high priority in most schools. Studies show a significant decline in both activity and fitness levels amongst Canadian children. The Campbell Survey on Well-Being (1988) indicated that only 10% of Canadian youth are active enough to maximize the wellness benefits associated with regular physical activity. According to a Canadian Health Promotion Survey (1990), the percentage of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who participate in physical activity on a daily basis had decreased from 29% in 1985 to 22.9% in 1990.

How can we reverse this decline in physical activity and health?

As education in general has become both a national and provincial concern, health and wellness has also become a national and provincial concern. As our society is more health conscious, citizens are more concerned about personal well-being, the health of the planet and those who inhabit it.

This kind of renewed sensitivity and global caring has led to the development of the concept of ACTIVE LIVING, a way of life in which physical activity is valued and integrated into daily life.

(CAHPER, 1992)

Parents want their children to pursue active lifestyles as they move towards and into adulthood; we know that the physical education class is a setting where we can reach all children, regardless of skill or background.

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Physical Education as a medium for **Active Living** in a school setting engages the 'whole' person ...

...physically --- through high level participation in appropriately selected activities

...mentally --- through concentration and intensity while learning new concepts and skills

...emotionally --- through the confidence that comes from enjoying established skills

...socially --- through associating with others, and

...spiritually --- through satisfaction, contentment, and a sense of inner peace.

Active Living contributes to individual wellness through the innate 'experience of the moment' and is reinforced on a daily basis through the knowledge, skills and feelings of enhanced self-esteem and wellness that develop over time. **Active Living** is a **way of life** in which physical activity is valued and integrated into daily living.

Active Living is anchored in three fundamental axioms that lead to the guiding principles for school physical education:

Individual: It recognizes that people are active for all sorts of reasons: work, play, challenge and achievement, health and personal development, contemplation and relaxation, creative and cultural expression, and social interaction.

Social: It focuses on the individual, but it also recognizes that social norms and values, available resources, influential learners and other factors affect our choices and opportunities for participation. Our choices, in turn, affect these factors.

Inclusive: It provides essential ways to express who we are as individuals or groups. It is a right of all Canadians, regardless of ability, age, gender, race, ethnic background, religion, socio-economic status, or educational achievement.

(Active Living Challenge, 1992; Focus on Active Living, 1992, Vol 1, No. 1)

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Active Living is More than Personal Well-being

An Active Living philosophy acknowledges learners as being multidimensional persons in an interdependent world. Rooted in the Active Living axioms, a rationale for physical education must be conceptualized in a way that starts with a holistic view of learners within a societal and ecological context. This conception must identify the interdependence of personal health with societal health and environmental, or ecological health (Lawson, 1992). On an individual level, physical education, as an agent for health and wellness, can promote personal responsibility and control for active lifestyles. However, equally as important, physical education must focus students' attention toward understanding the problems of the social environment that may inhibit them and others from pursuing active lifestyles. The challenge for physical education is to engage learners in experiences which require them to take personal responsibility for active and healthy lifestyles, while critically examining how society and the environment influences individual health in both positive and negative ways. As examples, provision for outdoor play space in a school yard provides opportunities for Active Living, while offering rhythmic activities to females only in a school prolongs stereotyping and restricts male access to valuable movement experiences. School and district personnel, as well as students, need to critically examine the social and environmental factors within their specific school-community settings that both facilitate and impede student participation in physical activity.

Socialization² surrounding physical activity appears to occur at a very early age, with males and females encountering differential treatment. Through study and inquiry in physical education, teachers can encourage students to confront and reshape cultural norms and values about physical activity, countering the socialization of our students toward inequity and inactivity. As we adjust the focus of physical education in our

² The process by which individuals become involved in physical activity and the roles they adopt.

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province we must begin to socialize our students toward developing active lifestyles which encourage all individuals, of all backgrounds, to be active on a daily basis.

A significant number of young Canadians are inactive - 15% of males and 23% females ages 10-14; 10% of males and 30% of females ages 15-19. Another 15% of males and 28% females ages 10-14; and 16% of males and 30% of females ages 15-19 are only moderately active.

(Campbell's Survey on the Well-Being of Canadians, 1988)

1.5 Guiding Principles for Physical Education

Based on the review of literature relative to the importance of physical education and physical activity in our society, a number of guiding principles have been developed to assist in adjusting the focus for a new curriculum framework. The guiding principles are statements of belief about physical education as a subject within the educational system of our province.

Physical Education, entrenched in Active Living

1. promotes a way of life in which physical activity is valued, enjoyed and integrated into daily life.
2. promotes the principle of individual choice by responding to learners' individual needs, interests and circumstances.
3. provides a unique contribution to lifelong development of all learners, enhancing their physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual well-being.
4. facilitates learning processes which encourage critical thinking, thereby affecting the learners' personal wellness and the well-being of society.
5. nurtures individual self-reflection and consciousness which preserve human rights and the development of supportive and sustainable environments for all citizens.

6. assists in the development of a 'whole world view' and empowers the learner to become proactive within the local, regional and global contexts for Active Living.

Adjusting the Focus: A Quest for Quality Daily Physical Education

In adjusting the focus of physical education in Newfoundland and Labrador, the curriculum framework promotes the ideal of Quality Daily Physical Education as a means to achieving its purpose. Active Living, as a way of life in school settings, is turned into reality through Quality Daily Physical Education. Physical education on a daily basis establishes the foundations for Active Living by providing experiences which enhance the learner's knowledge, attitudes and skills toward a wellness lifestyle. Mounting public concern for health and quality-of-life issues, and the way in which physical activity positively affects individuals, casts physical education into a leading role for changing personal lifestyles in our society.

Quality Daily Physical Education (QDPE) is a planned program of instruction and physical activity for all learners on a daily basis throughout the entire school year.

(CAHPER, 1993, p.8)

Quality Daily Physical Education programs are those which:

- ▶ are provided in a balanced and planned manner and are equitably taught to all learners throughout the entire school year as a valued and integral part of the entire educational process; and
- ▶ are facilitated by qualified physical educators, who are competent, enthusiastic and equitable in all respects. Physical education specialists³ serve as resource teachers in developing Active Living Schools. Through professional preparation,

³ A specially trained teacher of physical education, usually interpreted as having a "major" in physical education

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teacher development and ongoing curriculum adaptation and modification, all teachers gain sound knowledge of the three dimensions of movement.

A program of Quality Daily Physical Education includes:

- ▶ an individualized learner-centered pedagogy;
- ▶ a wide range of experiences to meet the diverse needs, abilities and interests of all students;
- ▶ health related fitness activities and motor skill related fitness activities;
- ▶ fun, fair-play, successful outcomes;
- ▶ leisure/recreational/competitive opportunities through intramural and extramural programming;
- ▶ environmental and social awareness;
- ▶ opportunities for learners to take responsibility for designing, achieving and maintaining physical activity beyond the school year and into the future;
- ▶ supportive parents, staff and administration;
- ▶ 150 minutes or more of instructional time in the weekly timetable;
- ▶ adequate facilities and equipment.

(CAHPER, 1992)

If physical education is to achieve its goal of all students living actively, students must be engaged in meaningful learning activities. If Active Living Schools are being created **for** students, it makes sense for Active Living Schools to be created **with** students and be relevant to their lives and their futures.

*We're concerned with being taught in a modern, real life way,
not the old, usual, traditional way.*

(Student, A Cappella, 1990, p. 16)

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An effective approach can be found in the Student Leadership Development Program, as initiated by the Canadian Intramural Recreation Association (CIRA). This program complements Quality Daily Physical Education, as instituted by the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD). In adjusting the focus to QDPE, our schools should call on the CAHPERD - CIRA partnership to network with other Active Living Schools throughout the nation.

Creating an Active Living Network of Schools and Communities

Active Living Schools are an integral part of a healthy community network which would see:

- ▶ school and community members reflecting on how physical activity enhances their personal and community wellness;
- ▶ school and community members integrating Active Living into all aspects of the school and the community;
- ▶ school and community members collaborating and cooperating as they build active and healthy learning and work environments;
- ▶ a province that strives to make Active Living a cultural trademark in all schools and all communities;
- ▶ Newfoundland and Labrador as a role model that links Quality Daily Physical Education and Active Living as a means of developing a society that values and cherishes academic, economic and social well-being.

1.6 The Contribution of Physical Education to the Essential Graduation Learnings

The Essential Graduation Learnings encompass all curriculum areas:

- 1) **Aesthetic Expression**
Graduates will be able to respond with critical awareness to various forms of the arts and be able to express themselves through the arts.
- 2) **Citizenship**
Graduates will be able to assess social, cultural, economic and environmental interdependence in a local and global context
- 3) **Communication**
Graduates will be able to use the listening, viewing, speaking, reading and writing modes of language(s), and mathematical and scientific concepts and symbols, to think, learn and communicate effectively.
- 4) **Personal Development**
Graduates will be able to continue to learn and to pursue an active, healthy lifestyle.
- 5) **Problem Solving**
Graduates will be able to use the strategies and processes needed to solve a wide variety of problems, including those requiring language, and mathematical and scientific concepts.
- 6) **Technological Competence**
Graduates will be able to use a variety of technologies, demonstrate an understanding of technological applications, and apply appropriate technologies for solving problems.
- 7) **Spiritual and Moral Development**
Graduates will be able to demonstrate understanding and appreciation for the place of belief systems in shaping the development of moral values and ethical conduct.

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Physical Education, viewed as education in, about and through movement, contributes to these Essential Graduation Learnings as follows:

1. Personal Development

Graduates will be able to, for example:

- ▶ make appropriate decisions in relation to physical activity and take responsibility for those decisions;
- ▶ explore movement activities purposefully both independently and in groups;
- ▶ demonstrate understanding of the relationship between health and an active lifestyle;
- ▶ discriminate among a wide variety of active living career opportunities;
- ▶ demonstrate leadership and interpersonal skills in relation to active living programs;
- ▶ reflect critically on personal-global issues in relation to active living.

2. Citizenship

Graduates will be able to, for example:

- ▶ demonstrate understanding of the importance of rules and regulations in society through the application of rules and principles of fair play in game situations;
- ▶ demonstrate understanding of sustainable development and its implications for the environment;
- ▶ demonstrate co-operative group skills;
- ▶ demonstrate understanding of the need for social interdependence;

3. Communication

Graduates will be able to, for example:

- ▶ explore, reflect on, and express their own ideas, learnings, perceptions and feelings relating to movement;
- ▶ demonstrate understanding of facts and relationships presented through words, numbers, symbols, graphs and charts, in relation to game or group activities;
- ▶ access, process, evaluate and share information relating to health and active living;
- ▶ present information and instructions clearly, logically, concisely and accurately for a variety of audiences;
- ▶ interpret, evaluate and express data in everyday language;
- ▶ critically reflect on and interpret ideas presented through a variety of media.

4. Problem Solving

Graduates will be able to, for example:

- ▶ identify, describe, formulate and reformulate movement problems;
- ▶ formulate tentative ideas, and question assumptions to solve movement problems individually and collaboratively;
- ▶ acquire, process and interpret information critically to make informed decisions related to active living;

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- ▶ use a variety of strategies and perspectives with flexibility and creativity for solving problems;
- ▶ frame and test hypotheses;
- ▶ ask questions, observe interpersonal relationships, make inferences and draw conclusions;
- ▶ identify, describe and interpret different points of view related to active living and distinguish fact from opinion.

5. Aesthetic Expression

Graduates will be able to, for example:

- ▶ use various movements as a means of formulating and expressing ideas, perceptions and feelings;
- ▶ demonstrate understanding of the contribution of movement to daily life, cultural identity and diversity, and the economy;
- ▶ demonstrate understanding of the ideas, perceptions and feelings of others as expressed in various movement forms;
- ▶ demonstrate understanding of the significance of cultural resources such as gymnasiums and outdoor recreational facilities.

6. Technological Competence

Graduates will be able to, for example:

- ▶ demonstrate understanding of and use existing and developing technologies relating to health and active living;
- ▶ locate, evaluate, adapt, create and share information relating to active living, using a variety of sources and technologies;
- ▶ demonstrate understanding of the impact of technology on health and active living;
- ▶ demonstrate understanding of ethical issues related to the use of technology in a local and personal-global context.

7. Spiritual and Moral Development

Graduates will be able to, for example:

- demonstrate an understanding in game situations that rules of ethical conduct are for the good of society;
- demonstrate a commitment to an active living philosophy that is consistent with the pursuit of peace, social justice, and respect for the sacredness and dignity of human life;
- demonstrate an understanding that their actions involve the good of others as well as oneself.

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This framework supports the Essential Graduation Learnings as the foundation for a formal education in which students are taught to view their world from a critical perspective. Students need to understand that their world is socially constructed, that all knowledge is historically, culturally and socially situated, and linked to their own personal histories and experiences. Through the process of personal development, students become active agents in re-creating or transforming the social conditions in their lives on a personal and global level. Methods of teaching foster dialogue and reflection, and create possibilities for action. Viewed in this context, the purpose of formal education is to facilitate critical reflection and self-awareness which strives to empower⁴ students to create a better, more just society.

Physical education is a social construct, "a selection from culture, which contains explicit and implicit values about appropriate missions, goals and objectives."

(Evans, 1988, p.2)

⁴ As a concept in the context of this Framework to 'empower' means empowerment-as-enablement rather than empowerment-as-authorization. See glossary for explanation.

