Research indicates that parents, educators and policy-makers who are concerned that physical activity participation decreases study time should in fact welcome time devoted to physical education, physical activity or sports. Even when the time is taken away from other subjects, physical education does not negatively affect academic achievement.

In fact, increased physical fitness and active living opportunities have positive effects on academic performance. Studies within Canada and from across the globe indicate that physical activity, sport and comprehensive school health approaches are related to enhanced learning and academic performance through:

- production of substances that protect delicate neurons in the brain
- improvements in memory, concentration and attention span
- improvements in grades and test scores
- increased self-esteem, self-confidence and self-image
- reduced misconduct behaviours at school
- increased feelings of school connectedness
- facilitating the inclusion of children with developmental or learning differences

For example, a comprehensive Ontario school health initiative including physical activity as a key element indicated a 36% increase in reading and a 24% increase in math scores over a two-year period. A study of over 5,000 students by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated that girls with the highest levels of physical education participation had higher math and reading scores. Another U.S. study of over 12,000 students indicated that daily physical activity was associated with higher math and reading achievement, echoed by an Alberta study of 3,000 students, which showed that active living had positive effects on school performance. Healthy bodies and healthy minds are what Canada needs to have a strong, thriving society!

Visit our enhanced web site at activehealthykids.ca to access tools and materials that can help you further understand and share the 2009 Report Card findings and its recommendations with others. Explore the complete in-depth analysis of the most current information in the detailed version of the Report Card.

Our interdisciplinary research team fully examines this information to determine grade assignments, considering available information on prevalence levels, international comparisons, trends over time, disparities, and newly emerging research and initiatives.

To overcome a societal problem of this magnitude, there needs to be engagement between all levels of government, non-government organizations, researchers, corporations and foundations in a collaborative effort to improve the physical activity profiles of the country’s future leaders.

Each year, we evolve the Report Card, working with our research team, partners and stakeholders. Our hope is that the findings in the Report Card will facilitate effective development and implementation of policy, programs, public awareness and research initiatives.
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With the growth of data in recent years, Active Healthy Kids Canada is able to bring light to the following key societal influences and outcomes connected to physical activity:

**Physical Activity Levels**

- **Active Play**
- **Active Transportation**
- **Organized Sport and Physical Activity Participation**
- **Screen Time**

**Outcomes**

- Mental Health
- Physical Health
- Academic Performance

**INFLUENCES**

- Research and the National Council of Science and Innovation
- Funding
- Policy

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- **Indicators**

**INDICATOR**

- Physical Education
- Sport and Active Recreation
- School and Community Opportunities at School

**GRADE**

- C
- B
- A

**Proximity and Accessibility**

- 65% of parents surveyed feel that there are appropriate programs and facilities for their kids to be active locally.

**On the Move**

- 58% of Canadian municipalities surveyed offer discounted fee structures for families to help encourage and promote physical activity.

**Community Programming**

- 84% of Canadian municipalities report that they offer physical activity programming or scheduling targeted toward families--an increase since 2006.

**Parental Support**

- The majority of Canadian parents also report that the programs and facilities meet the needs of their children well or very well.

**Community Contact and Participation**

- Over a decade, perceptions of neighborhood safety have remained high in parents of preschool children.

**Federal Policy**

- Although more than 80% of Canadian families indicate they walk to a reasonable distance to schools, parents report that only 1/3 of children report having walked to school in 2008/09 and report never having cycled to school.

**Neighborhood Safety**

- Only 1/4 of municipalities have guidelines specifying bicycle racks at public buildings and other community facilities.

**Accessibility**

- While there have been some promising investments in sport and recreation infrastructure in 2008, the data from the Standing Committee on Health Report from 2007 need greater clarity and inclusion.

**Screen Time**

- Of the 1/3 of Canadian families that live within a reasonable distance to a walking or cycling route to school, parents report that just 1/3 of children report having walked to school in 2008/09 and report never having cycled to school.

**Sports and Recreation Practice**

- Only 23% of schools say that only a trained physical educator teaches physical education—a substantial decrease since 2001.

**Socio Economic Status**

- 65% of schools report that only a trained physical educator teaches physical education—substantially since 2001.

**Physical Education**

- Only 25% of schools say that only a trained physical educator teaches physical education—substantially since 2001.

**Sport and Active Recreation**

- Regional data from a number of jurisdictions indicate that 15% of students feel they are not very active or not very active at all in school during physical education classes. It is possible that these schools report more concerning findings than any previously used self-report data. In 2006, the findings show a positive change may be on the horizon. We are just getting a handle on our clients to a more physically active population.

**School and Community Opportunities at School**

- While there have been some promising investments in sport and recreation infrastructure in 2008, the data from the Standing Committee on Health Report from 2007 need greater clarity and inclusion.

**Infrastructure and Equipment**

- 98-96% of schools have a gym, playground equipment, playing fields, and pencil play areas, with 80-70% of students and teachers seeing these as in good condition. These numbers have increased to a decrease in some types of access to physical education, including running tracks, swimming pools, tennis courts or weight rooms.

**Family Environment**

- Parents do not have a strong sense of the actual physical activity levels of their children—one regional study indicates that 68% of parents say their kids are physically active, yet objective measures indicate that 80% are not meeting physical activity guidelines. However, there is evidence to indicate parents are working to ensure that their kids are action through encouragement, financial support, and ensuring that their kids have access to programs and facilities.

**Peer Influence**

- 65% of parents surveyed feel that there are adequate programs and facilities for their kids to be active locally.

**Community Contact and Participation**

- 58% of Canadian municipalities surveyed offer discounted fee structures for families to help encourage and promote physical activity.

**Perceptions of Safety and Neighborhoods**

- The majority of Canadian parents also report that the programs and facilities meet the needs of their children well or very well.

**Safety and Playgrounds**

- 83% of youth in Canada report that their neighbourhood is safe for younger children.

**School Policy**

- Only 1/4 of municipalities have guidelines specifying bicycle racks at public buildings and other community facilities.

**Programs, Parks, and Playgrounds**

- 84% of Canadian municipalities report that they offer physical activity programming or scheduling targeted toward families—an increase since 2006.

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Growing Strong, Smart Kids

The 2009 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth is the fifth annual reflection on the many issues impacting the physical activity levels of young people in this country. This year, we are highlighting the important role physical activity plays in facilitating learning and academic performance.

With the growth of data in recent years, Active Healthy Kids Canada is able to bring you the most current objective assessment of physical activity levels of children and youth.

We also consider the most current literature reviewing the relationships between individual characteristics and the many influences and outcomes connected to physical activity. We assess indicators within these sources of evidence—family and peers, school, community and built environment, and societal influences—in facilitating, encouraging and physical activity.

It is important to consider the indicators below in terms of how they increase or decrease physical activity levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Activity Levels</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Play</td>
<td></td>
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| Active Transportation |
| Active Play |

- There are comprehensive national representative data to accurately assess the indicator.
- However, only 15% of youth in Canada are engaged in educational programs. Further information shows 13% of youth indicating they are not active at all.

- Children from 15 to 19 are more likely to have played an organized sport or sports, compared to children who have been physically active.

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- 87% of children and youth are not meeting the recommended 60-minute period of physical activity.

- Only 20% of Canadian children and youth are meeting the recommended 60-minute period of physical activity.

- Children from low socio-economic status backgrounds are at a disadvantage. Not only are the physical activity levels of young people in this country.

- We need to pay particular attention to the disparities in physical activity levels:

- Objectively measured data indicate that the proportion of children and youth who are active through encouragement, financial support, transportation and tailoring.

- The increase in active gaming may help transition some from sedentary behavior to being an active child.

- There has been an increase in support from philanthropic, research and industry funding toward families— an increase since 2007.

- The collective goal declared by provincial Ministers of Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation in Canada has collectively

- School health policies have increased from 9% in 2006 to 13% in 2008.

- Only 20% of children say they only had physical education teachers who teach physical education as a substantive discipline.

- The School Health Program is making progress on developing a positive attitude toward physical activity and healthy eating.

- While there has been some promising investments in sport and recreation, in Alberta in 2008, the actions for the Standing Committee on Health Report from 2007 need greater...
Family and Peers

Physical Activity Levels

INFLUENCES
- Caregivers and the Family
- Community and the Built Environment
- Policy

OUTCOMES
- Mental Health
- Physical Health
- Academic Performance

Summary

The 2009 Active Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth is the fifth annual reflection on the many issues impacting children’s physical activity levels. This year, we are highlighting the important role physical activity plays in facilitating learning and performance. We need to pay particular attention to the disparities in physical activity. For example, in assessing many of the indicators, children with disabilities and children from low socio-economic status backgrounds are at a disadvantage. Not only are these children at risk of not receiving the health benefits of physical activity, they are missing out on the cognitive benefits.

It is important to consider the indicators below in terms of how they change or decrease physical activity levels:

Active Play

Organized Sport and Physical Activity Participation

Screen Time

INSTRUCTIONS

Although nearly 1/3 of Canadian families indicate that they live in a reasonable distance to walk or ride to school, parents report that just 1/3 of children report having walked to school or being active in any form. There are some interesting findings with respect to the influence of peer support on physical activity: one regional study indicates that 88% of parents say their kids are physically active, yet 46% have not implemented policies to hire teachers with university qualifications in PE. There has been a decrease in some types of access to baseball diamonds, skating rinks, running tracks, swimming pools, tennis courts or weight rooms. There has been an increase in support from provincial Ministries of Physical Activity and Recreation to increase physical activity levels by 20% by 2015. We need to ensure that this upward trend continues so we can meet and surpass that goal.

The increase in active gaming may help transition screen time from strictly being sedentary time to time spent playing a video game with motion controls.

Current national data indicates that only 1/3 of Canadian youth are meeting the guidelines for screen time. A recent review of several regional surveys show positive findings, moving to levels closer to the guideline. A national survey of parents indicates that only 15% report frequent use of programs and facilities, and only 16% report frequent use of parks and spaces.

The collective goal declared by provincial Ministers of Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation in 2007 was to increase participation in sport and physical activity in schools by 10 – 40% by 2010, indicating specific policies regarding safe pedi and bicycle routes within school zones. However, only 23% of schools say that only a trained physical educator teaches physical education—this is a substantial decrease since 2001. Only 23% of schools report that their neighborhood is safe for younger children to play outside.

There has been an increase in support from provincial Ministries of Physical Activity and Recreation Funding improves the overall health of young people—this is critical to further facilitating behavior change.

GROWING STRONG, SMART KIDS

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