



# CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF HEALTHY, ACTIVE LIVING

1921-2021



# Land Acknowledgement

Ophea's work takes place on traditional Indigenous territories all across Ontario. We are grateful for the opportunity to meet and work on these territories and recognize the enduring presence of Indigenous peoples on this land.

Ophea's office is on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. We acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

# Importance and History of Health and Physical Education

Health and Physical Education programming sets a foundation for developing students' physical and health literacy. It supports and promotes the comprehension, capacity, and commitment they will need to lead healthy, active lives. It emphasizes building relationships with local communities to understand perspectives that consider Health and Physical Education as part of an interconnected whole, where "being well" has cultural meaning, such as knowing your language, history, and/or traditions.

When students can use their voices, make choices, and reflect on what they are learning and how it is personally relevant, they often describe Health and Physical Education as being meaningful to them. This can have impact on the likelihood of leading healthy, physically active lives throughout their lifespan.

While the concepts of equity, diversity, and inclusion are central to the implementation of the Health and Physical Education curriculum in Ontario, this hasn't always been the case. In fact, Health and Physical Education has played a historic role in Canada's colonialism and is implicated in racism, ableism, and other oppressive behaviours within the education system.

Stakeholders within Health and Physical Education have important roles to play in unravelling and understanding how this subject area can contribute to reconciliation and achieve its intended goals of respecting and celebrating diversity.





# Message from the President and Executive Director & CEO

For 100 years, Ophea has been working to support the health and learning of children and youth in Ontario. And although we've evolved and adapted in many ways during this time, our core focus has always remained the same: to increase the confidence of educators to foster healthy, active skills and habits in each new generation of students.

For decades, often in partnership, we have provided province-wide resources and programs to bridge policy and practice to support school communities to become healthier, safer, and happier. By building these relationships, creating and sharing knowledge, and initiating dialogue, we are working collaboratively to build understanding and change attitudes, teaching practices, and students' lives across the province.

Ophea has had the advantage of engaging with the highest quality individuals, including our board of directors, staff, volunteers, and professionals working within the education system, who have made Ophea what it is today. This includes the educators who have worked tirelessly over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic to foster hope, resilience, and learning for students and their families through one of the most challenging periods our generation has ever faced.

Now, as we look forward to the next 100 years, Ophea remains committed to working toward an Ontario where children and youth grow up healthier and happier with the knowledge and skills they need to make informed choices about their health and well-being.

Yours in health,

**John Dance**  
President

**Chris Markham**  
Executive Director and CEO

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# THE Ophea Story



Since 1921, Ophea has been working to support the health and learning of children and youth in school communities through quality programs and services, partnerships, and advocacy.

## 1 Here's how it unfolds:

### WE BELIEVE:

- ✔ To have the greatest positive impact on as many children and youth as we can, schools are the most effective intervention space for our work.

### WE'RE COMMITTED:

- ✔ To providing quality teaching supports that build capacity.
- ✔ To supporting and recognizing the role schools play in creating the conditions for healthy communities.

### WE'VE LEARNED:

- ✔ School health programs are most effective when delivered in healthy schools and when learning is supported by school staff, families, and communities.

## 2 Here's how we do it:

### WE'RE CONNECTORS:

- ✔ We connect with key audiences at many levels.
- ✔ Our primary audience is educators.
- ✔ Our secondary audiences are those working at school, regional, and provincial levels.

### WE'RE PROVIDERS:

- ✔ We develop and disseminate quality, evidence-based material.
- ✔ We enhance the capacity of school communities by providing curriculum supports and professional learning for educators, classrooms, and schools.
- ✔ We assist school communities to focus on safe instructional practices.
- ✔ We support, recognize, and celebrate healthy school communities.

### WE'RE LEADERS:

- ✔ We're the go-to organization for school health programming.
- ✔ We advocate, influence, and directly support implementation of policies that support the health and well-being of students.

# THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND OUR STORY

Ophea's mandate has focused on providing quality curriculum and classroom supports for educators to increase their confidence in supporting school health programming in multiple learning environments. The idea that children and youth are able to gain the knowledge and skills to lead healthy, active lives is as important today as it was back in 1921.

## OUR APPROACH



To create sustainable change, we work across multiple levels of the education system, including classrooms (teachers), schools (principals, student leaders), regions (school board staff, public health, faculties of education), and the province (government, non-government organizations, researchers, funding partners).

## OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION



We believe that equity, diversity, and inclusion are foundational to all school health programming. We are committed to continuous learning to ensure that our teaching supports and school programs support a safe, welcoming environment for all students.

## OUR REPUTATION



Our reputation of producing quality resources, our capacity to manage a high volume of projects, our innovative culture, our commitment to continual improvement, and our willingness to take risks have built our capacity to have a significant impact.

## OUR PEOPLE



We've had the benefit of working with the highest quality individuals, including our board of directors, staff, volunteers, and professionals working within the education system, who have made Ophea what it is today.

# OPHEA: THEN AND NOW

Over the past 100 years, Ophea's influence and impact has grown:

THEN



NOW

## Our Reach

\* In 1933, Ophea provided services to **400 educators**.

\* In 2021, Ophea provides services to **212,328 educators, public health professionals, and faculty of education students** through our websites alone.

## Our Health and Physical Education Resources

\* In 2000, Ophea's Health and Physical Education resources were available to **7,000 Ontario educators** through our Ophea.net website (in English only).

\* In 2021, Ophea's Health and Physical Education resources are available to **all 125,000+ Ontario educators** (in English and French) through our Teaching Tools website with the potential to reach over **2 million students**.

## Our Safety Standards

\* In 1985, a committee was formed to produce the inaugural Ontario Safety Guidelines (now Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education). Their purpose was to establish safety standards for physical education in Ontario schools.

\* In 2021, the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education are the leading standard for student safety in curricular, intramural, and interschool settings in all Ontario school boards. They provide the foundation for provincial safety standards in schools in other provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island) across Canada.

## Our Healthy Schools

\* In 2000, Ophea ran its first pilot program (Active Schools) to demonstrate the positive impacts associated with schools taking a comprehensive school health approach.

\* In 2021, Ophea's Healthy Schools Certification program has certified over **1,000 school communities** in taking a comprehensive school health approach to prioritize student health and well-being, impacting over **400,000 students**.

# OPHEA: THEN AND NOW

THEN



NOW

## Our Professional Learning Services

- \* In 1971, the Ophea Fall Conference trained **88 educators**.
- \* In 2021, Ophea trained **25,386 educators** through our e-Learning platforms.

## Our Communication Channels

- \* In 1971, Ophea's *Connection* newsletter was mailed to **500 educators**.
- \* In 2021, Ophea's *eConnection* electronic newsletter reaches over **50,000 educational stakeholders** on a monthly basis.
- \* In 2010, Ophea joined our first social media platform (Facebook).
- \* In 2021, Ophea's social network platforms (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube) engage over **28,000 followers** daily.

## Our Provincial Networks

- \* In 1986, Ophea began a Key Networker System to establish key contacts across all of Ontario's school boards.
- \* In 2021, Ophea's Service Delivery Network consists of over **100 key contacts across all of Ontario's 72 school boards, 34 public health units, and 13 faculties of education**.

## Our Team

- \* In 1986, Ophea's team included **1** part-time projects coordinator.
- \* In 2021, Ophea's team includes **17** full-time staff members, as well as hundreds of volunteers and contributors across Ontario.

## Our Finances

- \* In 1990, Ophea was incorporated with an annual budget of **\$312,694** and no financial reserves.
- \* In 2021, Ophea operates with an annual budget of **\$3.6 million** with **\$1 million** in financial reserves.

# OPHEA'S IMPACT OVER TIME: POSITIONS, PAPERS, AND POLICIES

Ophea influences system level change by advocating for healthy public policies, nurturing stakeholder networks, demonstrating thought leadership, and adapting to changing conditions by building movements that advance our mandate.

## Highlights:

1970s

>>> Advocates for **Quality Daily Physical Education** in Ontario schools.

1980s

>>> Advocates for **Bill 82 (Special Education)** to support educators working with exceptional students.

1990s

>>> Drafts **Healthy Active Living Standards** for Health and Physical Education and supports the Ministry of Education in developing Ontario's provincial curriculum.

2000s

>>> Advocates with the sector for effective school health policies and government releases **Daily Physical Activity Policy** for elementary schools and the **Foundations for a Healthy School Resource**.

Releases a **Healthy Schools Matter** discussion paper and advocates that all students have the right to attend a healthy school.

2010s

>>> Advocates in partnership (with over 50 organizations) to ensure the finalization, release, and implementation of the **Health and Physical Education curriculum**.

Advocates to expand student health by including **asthma management** and other **prevalent medical conditions** in school planning.

Provides foundational **Concussion Protocols** that support the development of Ontario's School Board Policies on Concussions.

Advocates to ensure the benefits of a provincially recognized comprehensive school health approach are realized and self-funds the initial development of the **Healthy Schools Certification** program.

2020s

>>> Serves as a key contributor in the Canadian Healthy Schools Alliance's **Healthy Schools Standards**, a companion resource to support the implementation of comprehensive school health in schools across Canada.

# OPHEA'S IMPACT OVER TIME: HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Health and Physical Education is a core subject taught in Ontario schools with the aim of fostering student health and well-being. The Health and Physical Education curriculum focuses on skills and strategies that can be transferred from the context of the classroom to healthy, active living outside school—assisting Ontario’s children and youth to reach their full potential.

Ophea designs and produces differentiated classroom and curriculum supports. We aim to facilitate and enable consistent, high-quality delivery of the Health and Physical Education curriculum through all Ontario educators.

## Highlights:

1921



Forms as the **Public Health and Physical Education** section of the Ontario Education Association.

1930-50s



Members collaborate through **workshops, conferences, and luncheons** to enhance their professional learning and community of practice for physical education and school health.

1960s



Begins hosting the **Ophea Conference** for physical education and school health education.

1970s



Publishes the first **Ophea Journal** to support teacher practice.

1980s



Establishes a **Key Networker System** of Health and Physical Education contacts across each school board to better understand regional needs.

1990s



Is contracted to write the secondary Health and Physical Education curriculum upon the release of Ontario’s first ever **elementary Health and Physical Education curriculum (1998)**.

Secures investments from provincial school boards and develops Health and Physical Education curriculum support resources, “**the Binders**,” for educators across Ontario.

2000s



Supports a revised curriculum, including a **Daily Physical Activity** policy through innovative resources (including **PlaySport**), professional learning opportunities, videos, and music.

# OPHEA'S IMPACT OVER TIME: HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

## Highlights (continued):

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2010s



Responds as the government releases an **updated elementary Health and Physical Education curriculum (2010)** and within three months withdraws it because of concerns over sexual health education content.

Secures investments from all school boards, along with support from over 100 partners, to develop and deliver **elementary Health and Physical Education curriculum resources**, which includes over 1,000 elementary lesson plans, as well as student materials, visual supports, and assessment tools.

Pilots a successful **Instructional Coaching Model** with 30 coaches across 15 school boards to support Health and Physical Education implementation to meet teachers' context-specific needs.

Launches an annual **Ophea School Board Membership** to enable access and enhance elementary and secondary Health and Physical Education curriculum supports for educators in all Ontario school boards.

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2020



Pivots in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and develops **Health and Physical Education at Home**, a collection of lesson plans, activities, and videos to support virtual learning.

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# OPHEA'S IMPACT OVER TIME: STUDENT SAFETY

Experiencing a wide-range of opportunities to learn, practice, participate in, and enjoy physical activity is an important part of all students' day-to-day education. The many positive benefits of physical activity are connected to achievement, mental health, well-being, and overall student success.

Ophea supports schools by helping create safe learning environments, which are a necessary part of students' education experience. It's important that students feel comfortable and secure, and ready to participate. Ensuring safe instructional practices, through Ophea's Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education, minimizes the inherent element of risk associated with any physical activity.

## Highlights:

1986



Releases the **Ontario Safety Guidelines** to meet the needs of physical education environments, impacting all provincial school boards and educators.

2000s



Secures funding from the government to support **asthma education** in schools (this work continues today).

2010s



Provides **national copyright of Ontario Safety Guidelines** content to Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island as the basis for provincial safety standards.

Secures funding from government for **French adaptation** of the Ontario Safety Guidelines.

Secures funding from the Ministry of Education to enable **Ontario Safety Guidelines open access** for all schools across Ontario (ending the school board paid subscription model).

Works with key partners to support **sexual violence prevention education** in Ontario schools through resources, professional learning, and educational campaigns.

Works with key partners to support school boards with implementation of a **multiple medical conditions policy** to ensure safety of students with asthma, diabetes, anaphylaxis, and epilepsy.

Ophea re-brands the Ontario Safety Guidelines as the **Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education** and undertakes a significant website redevelopment.

2020s



Provides **COVID-19 safety considerations** throughout the pandemic to support delivery of safe physical activity across different settings.

# OPHEA'S IMPACT OVER TIME: HEALTHY SCHOOLS

School settings provide multiple entry points to support student health and well-being. When student learning is supported by school staff, families, and communities, the concepts they are learning are validated and reinforced.

Ophea's Healthy Schools Certification program supports schools through a process that helps them take a planned and comprehensive approach toward promoting and enhancing the health and well-being of students and the broader school community.

## Highlights:

1990s



Establishes five **regional facilitators across Ontario** to support community-based physical activity and partnerships with community and provincial organizations.

Launches **Active Schools**, a comprehensive school health program focused on physical activity that positively impacts student health and academic achievement.

2000s



Runs **Living School** (2002–2005), a comprehensive school health initiative that demonstrates positive impacts on student health and academic achievement.

2010s



Implements and evaluates a **Smoke-Free Ontario Pilot Program** in 24 schools, reinforcing that there is value in taking a Healthy Schools approach (integrating multiple health topics) versus a topic-specific approach to tobacco prevention.

Launches **Healthy Schools Certification**, a provincial program focused on supporting and recognizing schools following a comprehensive school health approach to address localized health priorities.

Becomes a founding member of the **Canadian Alliance for Healthy School Communities**, in partnership with a network of leading provincial and national stakeholders, to support student health and well-being in schools across Canada.

Collaborates on a two-year **Healthy Schools Certification National Pilot** (in partnership with PHE Canada, Ever Active Schools, and DASH BC), and findings demonstrate the potential for the program to be successfully scaled nationally.

# OPHEA'S FUTURE: THE PATH AHEAD

After 100 years of supporting the health and learning of children and youth, Ophea will prioritize the following client-centred, evidence-informed areas of focus as we move forward:

## EQUITY AND INCLUSION:

A continued focus on learning and understanding how to better support educators in creating and delivering safe, inclusive programming to support the health and well-being of every student in Ontario.

## STUDENT AND STAFF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING:

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an adverse experience for many young people. While the long-term impacts are still unknown, Ophea needs to play a role in creating awareness of the importance of school connectedness for student mental health and well-being, as well as understanding how we can support improved physical and health outcomes for students and staff in classrooms and school communities across Ontario.

## CHANGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS:

The delivery of education is changing and Ophea needs to continue to understand the opportunities and challenges associated with learning in multiple environments. This not only applies to students, but also to what supports quality implementation of Health and Physical Education. While Ophea continues to enhance our suite of digital supports, there is still value in recognizing that students cannot thrive with a fully digital educational experience and they benefit greatly when learning from qualified, supported educators.

## EXPANSION AND SCALING OF EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS:

Ophea will continue to identify and scale interventions that support classroom learning in healthy active living education (including, but not limited to, Health and Physical Education) and programs that are effectively delivered in healthy schools where students' learning is supported by educators, school staff, families, and community members.



12 Concorde Place, Suite 204B  
Toronto, Ontario M3C 3R8

Phone: 416-426-7120  
Toll Free: 1-855-526-7120  
[info@ophea.net](mailto:info@ophea.net)

[ophea.net](http://ophea.net)

