

Obesity and mental health identified as top health concerns facing Ontario school-aged children

Ophea led survey sheds light on parental attitudes toward Health and Physical Education, health issues, physical activity, healthy schools, and safety

Toronto, ON, March 8, 2018 - Parents believe that Ontario schools have an important role to play in the health and well-being of their children, according to a recent survey commissioned by [Ophea](#). The survey looked to better understand parental perspectives on pressing health issues and the important role schools play in supporting their children.

The provincially representative survey, which included more than 600 parents of school-aged children across the province, found that obesity (37 per cent) and mental health (32 per cent) were the top health issues identified facing Ontario children. Concerns have risen significantly about mental health (increase of 22 per cent) and addiction (increase of 9 per cent) since Ophea's last survey in 2010. Today, most parents (79 per cent) believe that the H&PE curriculum helps to address these concerns.

"Ontario schools have an important role to play in the health and well-being of our children, whether it is physical activity, health education, addressing mental health issues or discussing diet and nutrition," said Chris Markham, Executive Director and CEO of Ophea. "Though the majority of parents are satisfied with the Health and Physical Education offered at school, we see that there are concerns about the minimal amount of time dedicated to these programs. We should be challenging ourselves to ensure this is a priority."

In 2014, the Ontario government committed to encouraging 60 minutes of daily physical activity for children, and through this survey, 99 per cent of parents strongly agree about the importance of that goal. Most parents (89 per cent) also agree that schools have a critical role to ensure children are physically active during the regular school day. However, it was found that only one quarter of parents (26 per cent) report that their children are active to that standard, and the reported level of physical activity declines with the age of the child.

"Beyond health professionals and themselves, parents see teachers as the most trusted source of health information for their children," says Lori Lukinuk, President of Ophea's Board of Directors. "We call upon education partners to work with Ophea to support our schools to continue to be healthy schools - accepting and caring about physical safety and encouraging involvement amongst all students."

Ophea remains committed to working with school boards, government & non-governmental organizations, and private sector organizations to ensure the health of Ontario school-aged children is top of mind. For more information including the full survey report and infographic highlights, visit www.ophea.net/advocacy.

About the Survey

A survey of 651 Ontario-based parents of school-aged children was completed online between October 23 and October 31, 2017, by Environics Research Group.

About Ophea

Ophea is a not-for-profit organization that champions healthy, active living in schools and communities through quality programs and services, partnerships and advocacy. Ophea's vision is that all children and youth will value and enjoy the lifelong benefits of healthy, active living. To learn more about Ophea visit www.ophea.net.

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Media Contact

Ruth Kates

Marketing and Communications Leader

Ophea

ruth@ophea.org

416-426-7020