



DISCUSSION PAPER

**BUILDING TEACHER
CAPACITY TO DELIVER
PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN
ACT PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

A ROLE FOR LEADERS

Schools Cluster Project
Education Directorate
August 2016

**A HEALTHY
WEIGHT INITIATIVE**



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MINISTER'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to present the Discussion Paper accompanying the *Action Research Report on Building Teacher Capability to Deliver Physical Education in ACT Public Primary Schools* (The Report) to school leaders and teachers. I hope that the resources within the report will provide valuable support in continuing to build quality, structured and developmentally appropriate physical education programs in ACT public primary schools.

The habits children develop during their formative years will largely influence the type of life they lead as an adult so it is really important that we encourage young people to be healthy and active. We can do this by ensuring they are given fun and engaging opportunities to be physically active and are provided with high quality physical education. The evidence shows that being physically active helps students to concentrate during class, enhances their capacity to learn and, in the longer term, healthier students tend to attain higher levels of educational achievement.

As the Minister for Education I recognise the significance of the implementation of the *Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education* in all ACT schools. The Report provides insight into the importance of physical activity within the curriculum and aims to offer teachers a better understanding of the research linking health and education. The Report is timely as it offers the opportunity for school leaders to better understand the broader national and international contexts of physical education in schools and emerging evidence-based research on improving practice.

The Discussion Paper for school leaders and teachers encourages teachers to reflect on current practice and identify areas for potential improvement. I encourage you as teaching professionals to reflect on the questions in the discussion paper, and to seek out further information and support to enhance physical literacy and activity in your programs.

I commend the work of the partner organisations, ACT Education, and Health Directorates and Active Canberra on the *Action Research Report on Building Teacher Capability to Deliver Physical Education in ACT Public Primary Schools* and their ongoing commitment to the health of students in ACT Government primary schools.

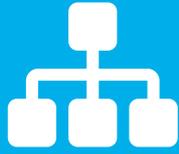
Shane Rattenbury MLA
Minister for Education



PURPOSE

To build teacher capacity to deliver structured, developmentally appropriate and high quality physical education programs in ACT public primary schools, school leaders and physical education providers are asked to consider the identified good practice approaches and how they might improve the provision of physical education. The good practice summarised here is supported by further data, detail and evidence in the *Action Research Report on the Building Teacher Capacity to Deliver Physical Education in ACT Public School Public Primary Schools Pilot Program: A role for leaders.*

STRUCTURE



1. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

2. TEACHER ENGAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



3. COMPONENTS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

4. TEACHER RESOURCES



5. RISK/ISSUE MANAGEMENT

5

KEY THEMES

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EACH INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

-▶ **Good Practice Approaches**
provides a synthesis of the general feedback identifying the suggested critical success factors for success under each theme
-▶ **Discussion**
gives a brief précis of the findings of the paper
-▶ **Questions for discussion and reflection**
provides questions that prompt the consideration of identified good practice in the context of the individual primary school.

I. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

1.1 Good Practice in School Leadership

Four good practice approaches related to school leadership contribute strongly to the ability of teachers to deliver quality physical education in public primary schools. These are:

- the school's Strategic and Operational Plan includes an objective that supports opportunities for physical activity across the school and an allocation for physical education resources and maintenance
- schools support and prioritise daily structured, developmentally appropriate physical education for years K to 6 and for all mandated physical activity time
- schools provide opportunities for teachers with expertise in physical education to mentor and support colleagues to develop their capability to deliver physical education
- school leaders demonstrate and model positive attitudes towards, and understanding of the benefits of physical activity for student's academic success, health and long term wellbeing.

1.2 Discussion

Active students are potentially better able to learn, and higher levels of educational achievement are associated with better health.

The delivery of physical education in ACT public primary schools is most successful when:

- it is part of a whole of school strategic approach that addresses budget, teacher capability, structured programs and lesson plans, community, stakeholders, equipment, resources and risk management
- the school principal supports the involvement of all staff
- the delivery of programs is supported by teachers with expertise in the area - support might include employment of secondary school physical education teachers, coaching by experienced physical education teachers within schools, upskilling teachers through professional learning, and accessing expertise from external providers or within the local primary and high school cluster
- experienced primary physical education teachers apply the appropriate pedagogy.

The focus on improving the quality of physical education in primary schools is part of a national and international trend.

1.3 Questions for reflection and discussion

- How does our school prioritise building teacher capacity in delivering physical education?
- How does our school timetable include explicit teaching time for the delivery of physical education?
- How does our school provide mentoring opportunities for our teachers to share expertise in the delivery of physical education?



2. TEACHER ENGAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

2.1 Good Practice Supporting Professional Learning

Six good practice approaches relating to positive teacher engagement and professional learning were identified. These were:

- school leaders build and sustain a coaching and mentoring culture at all levels in the school and have a system of peer review and feedback in place
- all teachers delivering physical education programs access professional learning and coaching to update their knowledge of the most current theory and practice for the delivery of physical education
- schools engage in clear and meaningful planning that underpins scheduled, structured, developmentally appropriate programs and lesson plans for all mandated physical activity time
- teachers demonstrate the skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver structured, developmentally appropriate physical education
- confident, experienced physical education teachers provide a leadership role in the planning and management of physical education, and coaching and mentoring colleagues
- new teachers are provided with coaching and mentoring to support delivery of quality physical education.

2.2 Discussion

The capability needed to deliver “developmentally appropriate” physical education content effectively requires teachers to have the following capability:

- primary school pedagogy provided by pre-service training
- a deep knowledge and understanding of the various pedagogies that exist for physical education
- the awareness to select and plan the most appropriate activity for each particular learning experience, adjusting to include culturally appropriate and socially-just pedagogies
- able to use the *Australian Curriculum* as the national framework for guidance on holistic, inclusive teaching, assessment and reporting of achievement
- expertise in mentoring new graduate teachers with physical education electives
- ongoing professional learning and relevant in-class coaching.

The development of the PE Pulse initiative provides access to key physical education providers offering tailored programs to suit school and teacher needs and experience.

2.3 Questions for reflection and discussion

- How does our school provide opportunities for staff to access current evidence-based teaching and learning practices in the delivery of physical education?
- How does the school engage in clear and meaningful planning that underpins scheduled, structured, developmentally appropriate programs and lesson plans for all physical activities?

3. COMPONENTS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

3.1 Good Practice for Physical Education Programs

Four good practice approaches that supported effective physical education programs were identified. These were:

- full student participation in physical education classes
- activities are inclusive, engaging, culturally appropriate and socially just
- the program aligns the delivering of *Australian Curriculum Health and Physical Education* with key *General Capabilities* including *Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capabilities, Ethical Behaviour and Intercultural Understanding*
- developmentally appropriate pedagogies are identified and applied to the delivery of physical education.

3.2 Discussion

Structured, developmentally appropriate physical education programs must link to the *Australian Curriculum* and be planned and conducted with the same discipline applied to deliver other learning areas in a school.

Each structured lesson design includes the following:

- each session commences with an outline of the key learning objectives and the context in terms of relevance such as gameplay or a skills developmental sequence
- activities start with flexibility, strength and warm-up exercises appropriate to the theme of the session or game being played
- teachers remain engaged in the physical activity, reinforcing teaching points, giving corrections on technique and demonstrating, or arranging for others to demonstrate, the correct form or technique
- the choice of activities aligns with desired outcomes or success criteria and these are communicated to students
- sessions end with a warm down and a period of analysis and reflection.

3.3 Questions for reflection and discussion

- How do our teachers deliver structured, developmentally appropriate physical education programs aligned to the *Australian Curriculum Health and Physical Education*?
- How do our school's physical education programs cater for the needs of all students in the school?
- How does our school support all teachers to have the appropriate skills and knowledge to deliver the Physical Education program?



4. TEACHER RESOURCES

4.1 Good Practice in Teacher Resources

Five good practice approaches to teacher resources that support teachers to deliver structured, developmentally appropriate physical education were identified. These were:

- teaching resources that link to the *Australian Curriculum* and structure programs according to age/level, skills and understandings
- written instructions on physical education skills are supported by video demonstrations
- appropriate, safe activity areas, including options for wet weather conditions, for the delivery of a range of physical education programs
- basic equipment is readily available, maintained and replaced regularly
- teachers are encouraged to collaborate and share resources through local school networks and collaborative tools such as Google Classrooms and other online platforms.

4.2 Discussion

Information resources that support teachers to deliver quality physical education include:

- well-planned and structured physical education programs, lesson plans and assessment tools that are developmentally appropriate
- access to social media platforms to communicate and share ideas, resources and information among both primary and high school teachers in Canberra, across all sectors and within schools.

School infrastructure features that assist effective primary school physical education include:

- a separate school hall and gym, a covered outdoor area that stays dry when it rains and is sheltered on very hot days, a vertical wall against the play space and surfaces that are safe and even, without trees or obstacles, and suitably shaped for game play
- school grounds should include a mixture of well maintained playing surfaces, ideally a minimum of 60 m x 20 m - concrete and rubber or soft fall surfaces should be marked out with court markings and grids
- adequate stores of age and size appropriate physical education and sports equipment available for the planned activities over the year and stored convenient to game areas.

4.3 Questions for reflection and discussion

- How does our school foster collaboration, the sharing of physical education resources, and mentoring opportunities across our school and with other schools?
- How does our school allocate appropriate, safe activity spaces, including options for wet weather conditions, for the delivery of a range of physical education programs?
- How does our school access appropriate and well maintained equipment for the delivery of a range of physical education activities?



5. RISK/ISSUE MANAGEMENT

5.1 Good Practice in Risk and Issue Management

Three good practice approaches to managing risks and issues relating to physical education were identified. These were:

- whole of school planning for physical education includes thoughtful risk management with input from experienced physical education teachers
- covered outdoor play spaces are available to support physical education sessions to continue safely in wet weather conditions
- school emergency protocols are in place to support outdoor physical education classes.

5.2 Discussion

The ACT Education Directorate physical education and sport policy and procedural support documents cover management of the risks commonly associated with physical education in schools.

Local risk mitigation strategies that are needed to support teachers to deliver physical education include:

- contact systems for teachers using isolated outdoor physical education play spaces to alert other members of staff or the front office when assistance is required when, for example a student is injured or leaves the activity e.g. Walkie Talkies, mobile phones and Red Card alerts
- alternative options where the school does not have purpose built spaces for physical education. Outdoor activity tends to gravitate to whatever open surfaces are available.
 - » teachers report that concrete surfaces are often inappropriate for many vigorous activities where the risk of injury from falling is higher
 - » bricked surfaces and those with mosaic tiles are also too hard and often have the added risk of being slippery, especially when wet
 - » grassed outdoor playing areas require a lot of maintenance in dry weather and may develop pot holes, raised grass tufts and an uneven surface.

5.4 Questions for reflection and discussion

- Does the planning of all physical education activities include comprehensive documented risk assessments and contingency plans in case of emergencies?
- Does planning include identification of appropriate areas to suit physical activities?

