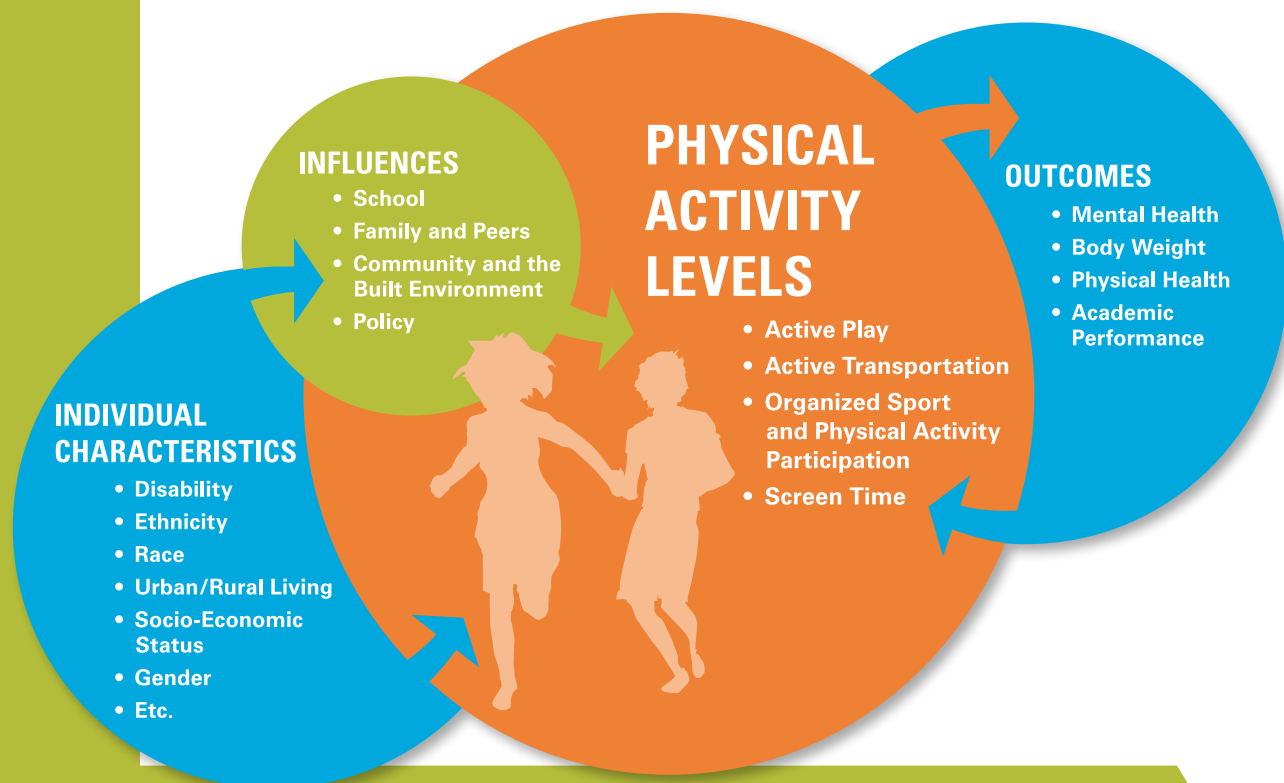


A young girl with long, wavy red hair is seen from behind, wearing a light green t-shirt and blue jeans. She is holding a piece of white chalk and writing on a dark green chalkboard. The text on the board is written in a cursive, handwritten style.

I wont skip fisical edjucation.
I wont skip fisical edjucation.
I wont skip fisic

Active kids are fit to learn.



Growing Strong, Smart Kids

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 in Canada.

We also consolidate the most current literature examining the relationships between individual characteristics and the many influences and outcomes connected to physical activity. We assess indicators within sources of influence—**family and peers, school, community and the built environment, and policy**—regarding their effectiveness in facilitating, promoting and encouraging physical activity.

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.

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 and youth not receiving the health benefits of being physical active, they are missing out on the cognitive benefits.

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

Physical activity plays an important role in facilitating learning and academic performance.

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 5,000 students, which showed that active living had positive results on school performance. Healthy bodies and healthy minds are what Canada needs to have a strong, thriving society!



Physical Activity Levels

F

↑ Moving on Up?

Objectively measured data indicate that the proportion of children and youth meeting the guidelines has increased from 9% in 2006 to 13% in 2008.

A Long Way to Go...

87% of children and youth are still not meeting the recommended 90 minutes of physical activity a day, as outlined in these guidelines.

This indicator is the core focus of the Report Card. In 2007, this grade dropped to an F based on newly available objectively measured physical data* gathered via pedometers, which revealed far more concerning findings than any previously used self-report data. In 2009, the findings show a positive change may be on the horizon. We are just getting a toehold on our climb to a more physically active population. Ministers of Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation in Canada have collectively set a goal to increase this number to 20% by 2015. We need to ensure that this upward trend continues so we can meet and surpass that goal.

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

It is also important to consider how the following key societal influences inhibit or facilitate physical activity:

INDICATOR	GRADE	
Active Transportation	D	Although nearly 2/3 of Canadian families indicate that they live within a reasonable distance to walk or cycle to school, parents report that just over 1/3 of children report having walked to school and 80% report never having cycled to school.
Active Play	INC	There are no comprehensive nationally representative data to adequately assess this indicator. However, only 50% of young children indicate participating in unorganized sport. Regional information shows 1/3 of youth indicate doing no physical activity as part of their free time and 60% of disabled youth report that they seldom or never play games with friends in their free time.
Organized Sport and Physical Activity Participation	C	Children from the lowest income level are three times more likely to never have participated in organized activities and sports, compared with those in the highest income level.
Screen Time	F	Current national data indicate that only 10% of Canadian youth are meeting the guideline for screen time of <2 hours per day, and many get close to 6 hours per day. However, new regional surveys show positive findings, moving to levels closer to the guideline. The increase in active gaming may help transition screen time from strictly being a sedentary activity.

* The CanPLAY survey is conducted annually by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, a key member of the Report Card research team. Details can be found in the long form Report Card.

	INDICATOR	GRADE	
School	Physical Education	C-	<p>Only 23% of schools say that only a trained physical educator teaches physical education—a substantial decrease since 2001.</p> <p>There is a smaller proportion of students taking PE at the secondary level compared with the elementary level, yet far more teachers trained in PE work in secondary schools than in middle and elementary schools.</p>
	Sport and Physical Activity Opportunities at School	B-	<p>Regional data from a number of jurisdictions indicate that 70% of students feel schools place some emphasis on student participation in recreational sports and more than 80% report that their school puts some emphasis on developing positive attitudes about physical activity and self-esteem.</p>
	Infrastructure and Equipment	B	<p>80 – 95% of schools have a gym, playground equipment, playing fields, and paved play areas, with 60 – 75% of students and schools reporting these are in good condition.</p> <p>There has been a decrease in some types of access to baseball diamonds, skating rinks, running tracks, swimming pools, tennis courts or weight rooms.</p>
	School Policy	C	<p>65% of schools surveyed report having a policy to increase physical activity among students. 53% have fully implemented policies to provide a range of physical activity opportunities. 46% have fully implemented policies to hire teachers with university qualifications in PE.</p>
Family and Peers	Family Environment	C+	<p>Parents do not have a strong sense of the actual physical activity levels of their children—one regional study indicates that 88% of parents say their kids are physically active, yet objective measures indicate that 87% are not meeting physical activity guidelines. However, there is evidence to indicate parents are working to ensure their kids are active through encouragement, financial support, transportation and volunteering.</p>
	Peer Influence	INC	<p>While there are some interesting findings with respect to the influence of peer support on activity levels, there is not enough information at this time to assign a grade.</p>
Community and Built Environment	Proximity and Accessibility	B	<p>92% percent of parents surveyed feel that there are adequate programs and facilities for their kids to be active locally.</p> <p>58% of Canadian municipalities surveyed offer discounted fee structures for families to help encourage and promote physical activity.</p>
	Usage of Facilities, Programs, Parks and Playgrounds	D	<p>A national survey of parents indicates that only 15% report frequent use of programs and facilities, and only 34% report frequent use of parks and spaces.</p>
	Community Programming	B+	<p>84% of Canadian municipalities report that they offer physical activity programming or scheduling targeted toward families—an increase since 2000.</p> <p>The majority of Canadian parents also report that the programs and facilities meet the needs of their children well or very well.</p>
	Perceptions of Safety and Maintenance	B	<p>For over a decade, perceptions of neighbourhood safety have remained high in parents of preschool children.</p> <p>83% of youth in Canada report that their neighbourhood is safe for younger children to play outside.</p>
	Municipal Policies and Regulations	D	<p>Only 1/4 of municipalities have guidelines specifying bicycle racks at public buildings and only 20 – 40% indicate having specific policies requiring safe pedestrian and bicycle routes when retrofitting existing communities or developing new areas.</p>
Policy	Federal Government Strategies and Investments	C	<p>While there have been some promising investments in sport and recreation infrastructure in 2008, the actions for the Standing Committee on Health Report from 2007 need greater attention. Federal transfer payments for sport and physical activity have dropped slightly, despite a promise of 1% of federal health funding to be directed at health promotion in 2007.</p>
	Provincial Government Strategies and Investments	C+	<p>The collective goal declared by provincial Ministers of Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation to increase physical activity levels by 2015 provides an impetus to reinforce provincial strategies and investments, but there needs to be increased attention given to gathering data and evaluative information on these various strategies.</p>
	Industry, Philanthropic and Research Investments	B-	<p>There has been an increase in support from philanthropic, research and industry funding sources in the area of physical activity—continued engagement and enhanced involvement of these sectors is critical to further facilitating behaviour change.</p>

Report Card Methodology, Findings and Recommendations

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.

Working Together to Grow Strong Kids and a Strong Society

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 profile 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.

Active Healthy Kids Canada relies upon its strategic partners, who play a critical role in the research, content development and communication of the Report Card:



Production of the Report Card has been made possible through financial support from the Public Health Agency of Canada* and the following partners:



Active Healthy Kids Canada
2 Bloor Street East Suite #1804
Toronto, ON
M4W 1A8
www.activehealthykids.ca

* The views expressed in the Report Card do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

