

Health and Physical Education Resource Document Grades 1-8

Introduction

The Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA) is to be commended for undertaking the mammoth task of producing a resource document for teachers to support **The Ontario Curriculum – Grades 1-8 Health and Physical Education**. The resource document provides teachers with extremely valuable content, including background information, strategies, assessment and evaluation ideas and accommodations, to teach every expectation listed in both the health and physical education strands of **The Ontario Curriculum**. This is indeed a great support to all teachers especially those who do not have the background to teach very specific content and skills in health and physical education. OPHEA is also to be commended for producing two versions of the resource document, one to support teachers in public schools and one to support teachers in Catholic schools.

For the most part the content in the document for use in Catholic schools is very appropriate but there are a few areas of concern which will be highlighted in this response paper. Some of the general observations, e.g., communication of the content, resources, and links with **Fully Alive** etc. will follow and observations, which relate to language and content at respective grade levels will be addressed separately. It should be noted that most of the concerns, particularly with respect to inappropriate content, are contained in the **Growth and Development** component.

Communication with Parents

The resource document for use in Catholic schools introduces the need to communicate to parents with respect to the content in the **Growth and Development** component from Grades 3 through to Grade 8 and a sample letter is provided at each grade level which details the content to be covered. The Family Edition books, which accompany the Fully Alive program, are not mentioned and neither are the theme letters, which are to be sent to parents. Communication with parents, with respect to the content of **Fully Alive**, begins in grade 1 and continues through to grade 8 and covers every aspect of the program not only the growth and development content of Theme 3. (No sample letter to parents is provided in the resource document for the other components: **Healthy Eating; Personal Safety and Injury Prevention** and **Substance Use and Abuse**). Because there is considerable opportunity to integrate much of the health content with **Fully Alive** this communication with parents, through the use of the Family Edition books and theme letters must continue and be highlighted for teachers.

Communication with Administrators

The resource document presents some very useful information for Administrators about the content of some aspects of the program, particularly in areas of sensitivity. There is also a **Value Set**, which outlines the underlying values of the content. Within this value set there is no inclusion of values inherent in Catholic teaching with respect to the dignity of the body and sexuality. Neither the **Fully Alive** program is mentioned nor the need to communicate with parents through the Family Edition Books and theme letters.

Links to the Ontario Catholic Schools Graduate expectations and Fully Alive

The resource document for use in Catholic schools contains numerous links to the **Ontario Catholic Schools Graduate Expectations** and the various themes and topics in the **Fully Alive** program at every grade level. The graduate expectations are presented consistently in the introductions of each component and in each sub-task (lesson), however the links to **Fully Alive** are not presented in a consistent manner. In some grade levels the links are included only in the introduction to the component and not in each sub-task and in other grade levels they are included in both the introduction and the sub-task. There is a chance that teachers will not always refer back to the introduction when preparing lessons and so may miss valuable opportunities for integration with **Fully Alive** when these links are not included in the sub-tasks. In some instances the links with **Fully Alive** are incorrect. (In grade 2 the links given in the resource document for the component **Personal Safety and Injury Prevention** are more appropriate for the **Healthy Eating** component. In Grade 5 the links given for the **Personal Safety and Injury Prevention** component are more appropriate for the **Substance Use and Abuse** component).

Resources

For every component and in some sub-tasks resources are included. It is doubtful that every resource has been previewed with respect to its suitability for use in Catholic schools. Of specific concern are the following:

- a list of books included in Grade 3 in the **Growth and Development** component which students read and record information, (content may be too explicit).
- videos for classroom use in Grades 5 and 6 to support information about puberty, (may not be consistent with the content of **Fully Alive**).

The need for teachers to preview all resources for suitability for use in Catholic schools is not included in the document.

Community Resources

The following agencies are recommended as sources of information/support for students in Grades 7 and 8:

Planned Parenthood
Teen Sex Information
STD clinics
Public Health
Sexual Assault Clinics

No Pro-Life Organization is included.

The Kids Help Phone Line is included as a resource for personal safety and sexuality issues from Grade 4 through to Grade 8.

Students in Catholic schools should not be given information about agencies, which would not support Catholic teaching about issues of respect for the body and sexuality.

More specific concerns about the content in the resource document for use in Catholic Schools are presented under the following headings: **Inappropriate Content** and **Inappropriate Language**.

Inappropriate Content

Concern	Reason
Grade 1 Diagram for major body parts (with private body parts) (Appendix G)	Presents information, which goes beyond the content of Fully Alive .
Grade 2 Refers back to the diagram from Grade 1 in the links to prior knowledge.	
Grade 3 Some of the books suggested for the students to read on birth/reproduction of humans and animals may not be appropriate.	Some of the material, which the students may use, will present them with information, which goes beyond the reproductive content of Fully Alive at the Grade 3 level.
Grade 4 In the notes to teachers about adolescent development menstruation and nocturnal emissions are discussed.	Fully Alive at the Grade 4 level includes the first diagrams of the reproductive systems and a brief description of sexual intercourse, but does not discuss menstruation or nocturnal emissions.
<p>Grade 5 The diagrams for the reproductive systems contain very detailed information.</p> <p>Sexual feelings are discussed.</p> <p>Menstrual products are presented in some detail including information about Toxic Shock Syndrome.</p> <p>The following Appendices (Student Worksheets) could be questionable for use with students: Appendices, H, I, K, L, M, N, P, Q, and U.</p>	The diagrams in Fully Alive at the Grade 5 level do not include the clitoris (female), or various glands producing seminal fluid (male). Sexual feelings (orgasm, masturbation) are not presented at this level in Fully Alive . Even though some Grade 5 girls may need some information about menstrual products, this should be done in a gender specific session following the guidelines in the additional notes to teachers contained at the end of Theme 3 in Fully Alive .
Grade 6 The diagrams for the reproductive system contain very detailed information, particularly for the parts of the vulva for females and the internal organs for males. The following Appendices could be questionable for use with students: Appendices: E, F, G, O and P.	The information contained on the diagrams for student use go beyond the content of Fully Alive at the Grade 6 level.
<p>Grade 7 The diagrams for the reproductive systems contain very detailed information, including an erect penis and a diagram of the female breast.</p> <p>Although abstinence is presented as the best choice to avoid the consequences of high-risk sexual behaviours (STDs, pregnancy), safer sex (i.e. use of condoms) is also presented. There is a suggestion that condom use should not only be discussed but also demonstrated.</p>	<p>The diagrams for student use contain information, which is not consistent with Fully Alive at Grade 7.</p> <p>Students will not receive the consistent message of abstinence as being the best choice to avoid STDs, pregnancy etc. if safer sex is also presented. Even though the use of Fully Alive is recommended, there is a concern that other information may also be presented to students, which would not be appropriate. The virtue of chastity is not presented and so there is a danger that students may not receive the moral context within which sexual behaviour should be discussed.</p>

Inappropriate Content

Concern	Reason
<p>In the information about contraception, there is no mention of the IUD or some pills acting as possible abortifacients.</p> <p>Natural Family Planning is presented as an unreliable method of preventing pregnancy and as more reliable for planning a pregnancy.</p> <p>The language used in some of the decision-making scenarios, (You may decide that you don't want to have sex until you are married or involved in a very serious relationship....or wait until you are older....or feel that you just don't want sexual relationships right now) presents a mixed and inconsistent message about abstinence.</p> <p>In the rules for a Question Box students are told to discuss moral/religious questions with parents/clergy. An implication is made that morality is not for classroom discussion.</p> <p>The following Appendices could be questionable for use with students: Appendices; B, E, F, G, H, I, J, X and W.</p>	<p>The information about some contraceptive methods is not consistent with, and goes beyond, the information in Fully Alive. Teachers are not advised to use the information about family planning, which is presented, at the Grade 8 level of Fully Alive.</p> <p>This kind of language promotes 'moral relativism' as a guide for sexual behaviour rather than the counter-cultural message of moral truth as the guide. A consistent message of abstinence (chastity) is not promoted.</p> <p>Parents and clergy are very important teachers of morality for students. Teachers in Catholic schools must also be teachers of morality to students. All classroom discussions pertaining to sexuality must reflect and include the moral teaching of the Church.</p>
<p>Grade 8 There is a note to Catholic teachers not to teach the expectation covering contraception (p. 177)</p> <p>In the sub-task about sexuality transmitted diseases and AIDS, even though abstinence is recommended, condom use is also advocated. There is also a suggestion to teachers to bring into class contraceptive foam, condoms, etc.</p>	<p>Ontario teachers are expected to teach all the expectations included in the Ontario Curriculum. Teachers have a very appropriate resource in Fully Alive, which does contain information about family planning and contraceptive methods from the Catholic Church perspective.</p> <p>Students will not receive the consistent message of abstinence as being the best choice to avoid STDs, pregnancy, etc., if 'safer sex' is also presented. Even though the use of Fully Alive is recommended, there is a concern that other inappropriate information may also be presented to students. The virtue of chastity is not presented and unless Fully Alive is the teaching resource there is a danger that students may not receive the moral context within which sexual behaviour should be discussed.</p>

<p>In the discussion about relationships, positive qualities of friendship are presented but the content goes beyond promoting friendship to providing a continuum of physical intimacy. “Wet kissing, touching above or below the waist with clothes on” are all presented as “safe activities”. There is also an assumption made in some of the decision-making scenarios that students of this age are sexually active. The following Appendices could be questionable for use with students: Appendices; I, L, M, Q, S and U</p>	<p>The positive qualities of friendship, which are the foundation of all relationships, should be the basis of discussion. To provide students with a license to engage in physical intimacy, even though abstinence is recommended, is not a consistent message and may result in sexual activity, which is not “safe”, and certainly not in the best interests of students of this age. The virtue of chastity, which guides all sexual behaviour, according to God’s plan, must be presented.</p>
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In light of the many concerns with the content of Grade 8, (from a Catholic faith perspective) it is recommended that only the material from sub-tasks 1 and 2 be used with students. The content from sub-tasks 3-7 should not be used with students. The expectations, which are covered within these sub-tasks, must be taught from a Catholic faith perspective. **Fully Alive** (Theme 3) and **AIDS: A Catholic Educational Approach to HIV** – Ontario Catholic Schools (Second) Edition – Institute of Catholic Education are the appropriate teaching resources.

Inappropriate Language

Concern	Reason
<p>Grade 1 The word “fag” is used in a student worksheet pertaining to feelings, (p.72)</p>	<p>This word is not appropriate for Grade 1 because many students will not know the meaning and so not need to be introduced to the meaning at such an early age. Parents may also object to such language being used especially on a student worksheet, which may go home. Teachers should always model appropriate language.</p>
<p>Grade 2 The word “fag” is used in a role play scenario (p.66)</p>	<p>This word is not appropriate for Grade 2 again because students do not need to be exposed to language they do not understand. Teachers need to model appropriate language at all times.</p>
<p>Grade 3 The word “geek” is used in a student worksheet providing role-play scenarios. (p.148)</p>	<p>To provide students with inappropriate language which can be used in role-play situations is not consistent with the need to model and accept appropriate language.</p>
<p>Grade 6 The word “butt” is used in a decision-making scenario. (p.223)</p>	<p>In classroom discussions about the human body, correct terminology is promoted as a sign of respect. To permit inappropriate language to be tolerated does not give students a consistent message about respect for the human body.</p>
<p>Grade 7 The word “butt” is used in 3 different decision-making scenarios, including a student worksheet. (pp.53, 55, 56)</p>	<p>To allow inappropriate terminology for the human body does not give students a consistent message of respect for the body.</p> <p>The use of disrespectful terms for a human person does not promote the dignity of person which must be foundational to all classroom language and modeled and promoted by teachers at all times.</p>
<p>Grade 8 The phrase “for Christ’s sake” is used in a short story. (p. 83)</p> <p>The word “butt” is used in a decision-making scenario.</p>	<p>The tolerance of such a phrase in classroom material demonstrates a lack of respect and honour for the person of Christ. Students may think it appropriate to use such language if it is presented to them in the classroom.</p> <p>The tolerance of language, which does not show respect for the human body, is not appropriate for classroom use.</p>

Health and Physical Education Resource Document Grades 9 and 10

The Ontario Health and Physical Education Association (OPHEA) is to be commended for producing the resource document to support the teaching of all the expectations in **The Ontario Curriculum – Grades 9 and 10 – Health and Physical Education**. As at the elementary level, two versions of the resource material were produced, to support teachers in both Catholic and public schools. The preparation of this resource will be extremely valuable to all teachers who have the responsibility of teaching health and physical education, especially those who do not have the background or skills relevant to this area of the curriculum.

In the introduction to this resource it is very clearly stated: “this resource is a supplement and is intended to be used as a companion to the Catholic Course Profiles. It is highly recommended that teachers use this resource side by side with the course profile.” Throughout all the components covered the references to the Catholic Course Profile are clearly stated. Because this resource has been developed using the Catholic Course Profile as a foundation, there are no areas of concern with respect to the suitability of the content and its use in Catholic schools. The Church teaching regarding respect for the body and sexuality is presented clearly and students are encouraged to reflect on this teaching when completing assignments. (In the Grade 9 component **Relationships and Sexuality** the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops’ letter **Intimacy and Sexuality** to Catholic secondary students is printed in its entirety and is the starting point and foundation for discussion and students’ response).

As with the elementary resource document, many resources are listed throughout. Some of these will be in the Catholic Course Profile but some may not. Teachers should be reminded of the need to preview all resources with respect to appropriateness for use with Catholic students.

Conclusion

One again OPHEA is to be congratulated and thanked for the tremendous amount of work which has been devoted to the preparation of the resource documents both at the elementary and secondary levels which will support countless numbers of teachers. The main areas of concern at the elementary level are focused in the **Growth and Development** component particularly from Grade 5 to Grade 8. The content found in the resource document often extends beyond the content of **Fully Alive** at respective grade levels, or does not present the Church teaching clearly about certain issues. Teachers need to be reminded to use **Fully Alive** as their primary teaching resource in order to ensure that all expectations are taught from a Catholic Faith perspective. Communication with parents at every grade level (1-8) through the use of the Family Edition Books and theme letters should be reinforced with administrators and teachers. At the secondary level, teachers of Grades 9 and 10 have the support of the Catholic Course Profiles upon which the resource documents are based to ensure the appropriateness for use in Catholic schools. All resources must be previewed thoroughly to ensure their suitability for use in Catholic schools. The acceptance of language which promotes the dignity of person and respect for the human body is an important responsibility of all teachers in Catholic schools and language which does not promote this dignity should be avoided in any classroom situation.