

on consultations with teachers and the community. Health and Life Skills and Physical Education are examples of two courses that address the health behaviours of students.

Health and Life Skills

Alberta Learning recommends that elementary students receive health and physical education for 10% of their weekly program (approximately 150 minutes a week). In junior high, the current time allocation for health education is 150 hours over three years. CALM 20 (the high school “health” course) is required for high school graduation and is offered for three credits (about 75 hours) or for five credits (125 hours).

Three general outcomes underpin the health program. Students in the program will:

- make responsible and informed choices to maintain health and to promote safety for self and others;
- demonstrate responsibility, respect, and caring in order to establish and maintain healthy interactions;
- use resources effectively to manage and explore life roles and career opportunities and challenges.

The new K-9 health and life skills program should be available this fall on the Alberta Learning web site: www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/bysubject/healthpls/default.asp. For further information about the health program, e-mail Mark Buckley at Mark.Buckley@gov.ab.ca.

Physical Education

As mentioned above, elementary students receive approximately 150 minutes of health and physical education a week. The time allotted for physical education in junior high schools is 75 hours a year. In high school, Physical Education 10 is mandatory for graduation, and is available for three credits (approximately 75 hours) or five credits (125 hours).

The general outcomes (the “ABCDs”) for K-12 physical education include:

- “A”: Students acquire skills through a variety of developmentally appropriate movement activities (e.g., aquatics and outdoor pursuits, dance, games, gymnastics, and individual activities).
- “B”: Students understand, experience, and appreciate the health benefits that result from physical activity (e.g., functional fitness, body image, and well-being).
- “C”: Students interact positively with others (e.g., communication, fair play, leadership, and team work).
- “D”: Students assume responsibility for leading an active life (e.g., effort, safety, goal setting/personal challenge, and active living in the community).

The University of Alberta, the Alberta Centre for Active Living, and Schools Come Alive recently assessed the current status of physical education in the province. The *Alberta Physical Education Study* provided ways to measure the effectiveness of the provincial curriculum. For more information about the study, contact Dr. Linda Thompson at linda.thompson@ualberta.ca.

School health and physical education are the only programs that allow all Alberta students to receive a proactive, healthy lifestyle message. In 1995, a conference of federal and provincial/territorial ministers responsible for fitness recognized the

serious consequences of physical inactivity for both Canadian youth and adults. The ministers set a goal to reduce physical inactivity among all Canadians by 10% by 2003 (Craig, Russell, Cameron, & Beaulieu, 1999).

For more information about Alberta Learning’s physical education program, contact Val Olekshy at val.olekshy@ualberta.ca.

Other Alberta Initiatives

Other initiatives focus on Alberta student health or on measuring student learning in relation to health or physical education.

Alberta Learning

The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/special/aisi/), a collaborative provincial project funded by Alberta Learning, provides resources for local school initiatives to enhance student learning. For example, some Alberta schools are implementing a project to improve and measure student learning in health and physical education. The results of these projects will help us to gather evidence about the benefits of health and physical education in schools.

Alberta Community Development

The Active Lifestyles Portfolio organizations (including the Alberta Centre for Active Living) collaborate to increase the number of physically active Albertans through programs, services, research, and advocacy. The member most closely aligned with youth is Schools Come Alive (www.schoolscomealive.org).

Joint Ministry Initiatives

Ever Active Schools supports teachers and administrators in implementing health and physical education. The project is funded by Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Community Development, and Alberta Learning, with additional support from Alberta Children’s Services. For further information, visit www.everactive.org.

Developed by Alberta Learning, Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Children’s Services, and the Alberta Mental Health Board, the Student Health Initiative promotes integrated health and related support services for children with special health needs, so that they can participate fully in education programs. Services eligible for funding include speech-language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, audiology, respiratory therapy, and nursing and emotional/behavioural supports. You can get more information about this initiative from www.learning.gov.ab.ca/shi.

The Alberta Children and Youth Initiative supports a cross-ministerial approach to children’s issues to ensure that Alberta’s children are safe, well cared for, successful at learning, and healthy (www.acs.gov.ab.ca/pdf/ab_child_initiative.pdf).

Conclusion

Many of the projects and initiatives discussed above target students with special needs. Some of these projects promote health-enhancing behaviours (e.g., health and physical education in schools, Ever Active Schools). We need to continue to connect programs and projects, using the Comprehensive School Health model, to ensure that Alberta children and youth lead a healthy lifestyle based on their individual potential.

References available on request or from the Alberta Centre for Active Living web site at www.centre4activeliving.ca.