

Dragon Boat

ELEMENTARY - CURRICULAR 2025

- Consult [Disability-Centred Safety](#) if your groups of students include students with disabilities.
- Consult [Risk Management](#).
- The safety standards for this activity must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).

Equipment

- Determine that all equipment is safe (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters) and all assistive devices (e.g., a walker) are in good working condition and properly adjusted for the height and mobility needs of the student prior to participation.
- Students must wear a correctly fitting, properly secured/fastened and Canadian approved personal flotation device (PFD) or lifejacket, with whistle/signaling device attached, at all times near the water, where the depth of the water poses a risk, in and on the water.
- Teachers and all individuals who assist with the watercraft activity (for example, Qualified Instructors, Trip Guides) are required to wear a correctly fitting, properly secured/fastened and Canadian approved PFD or lifejacket, with whistle/signaling device attached, at all times near the water, where the depth of the water poses a risk, in and on the water.

Watercraft

- Paddles and boats must be checked to assess that:
 - the boat meets [Transport Canada's Safe Boating Guide](#) requirements for small crafts.

- there are no splinters or cracks;
- the head, tail, drum, drummer's seat, and steering oar are securely fitted;
- the boat is not leaking and that bailers are in it;
- the centre seat is in place if it is a split boat; and
- the buoyancy compartments are functional and sufficient to create positive buoyancy.
- Paddles must be the appropriate size for the age and size of Students.
- Two audible alarm signals (for example, whistle, air horn) must be carried by the helm (boat steers-person).

Safety Craft

- A safety craft is a designated craft that is rescue-capable, taking into consideration necessary factors (for example, distance from shore, weather, water, wind conditions), and contains at least one Teacher, Qualified Instructor, or Trip Guide who meets the first aid certification.
- The safety craft must be motorized and equipped as per [Transport Canada's Safe Boating Guide requirements](#).
- The operator of the motorized safety craft must have a Pleasure Craft Operator Card, experience in navigating the craft, and knowledge of the waterway in which the activity takes place (for example hazards, rocks, shoals).
- The motorized safety craft must not pose a risk to the safety of the participants (for example, maintain a safe distance from the watercraft, operate at a speed that minimizes boat wake unless responding to an emergency).
- The motorized safety craft must be the first craft in the water with occupants aboard and the engine running before Students leave the beach, dock, or mooring and while Students are on the water.
- A reboarding device is required where the vertical height that a person must climb to reboard the boat from the water (freeboard) is over 0.5m (1'8").
- The motorized safety craft must be equipped with a bull-horn/megaphone.

Refer to the [First Aid](#) section for first aid equipment requirements.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Appropriate clothing and securely fitted footwear must be worn. A dry change of clothes must be available on shore.
- Glasses, if worn, must have a safety strap.
- When long hair poses a safety risk it must be secured. Devices (for example, hair pins, elastics and barrettes) used to tie back long hair must not present a safety concern.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

Facilities

- Determine that all facilities are safe and accessible for the students participating. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the teacher.
- Water and weather conditions must be appropriate for the skill level of the group.
- Before involving Students in an outdoor activity, Teachers/Monitors must take into consideration:
 - Water conditions (for example, temperature, currents, tides, and wave conditions).
 - Visibility of 500 m (1640') is required

Controlled Area

- A pool, shallow water, calm lakefront, or sheltered bay must be available for the teaching of basic stroke skills.

Environmental Considerations

- When environmental conditions may pose a risk to student safety (for example, thunderstorms [lightning] or student(s) with asthma, triggered by air quality), Teachers must take into consideration

their school board/school's protocols and procedures related to:

- environmental conditions (consult [Weather](#)); and
 - insects (for example, mosquitoes and ticks [consult the school/school board's protocols and/or regional Public Health Department's website]).
- Students must receive instruction on safety procedures related to environmental conditions and be made aware of ways to protect themselves (for example, sun burn, heat stroke, poisonous plants).
- At all times the school board's weather and insect procedures are the minimum standards. In situations where a higher standard of care is presented (for example, outside activity providers, facility/program coordinators), the higher standard of care must be followed.
- Dragon boating must be cancelled in adverse weather conditions.

Special Rules/Instructions

Student Medical Information

- Teachers must be aware of Students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, diabetes, epilepsy) may affect participation. Consult [Medical Conditions](#).
- Teachers must be aware of Students participating with orthopedic device(s) and/or assistive devices and establish safety rules and procedures to ensure Students can participate safely in activities.
- Teachers are required to inform all individuals who assist with the activity (for example Qualified Instructors, Aquatic Instructors, Lifeguards, Volunteers) of Students who have needs, orthopedic, assistive devices, and/or medical conditions that may influence participation.

School Board Policies and Procedures

- Students must not participate in the activity until they receive information on concussion prevention specific to the activity, inherent risks of the activity (for example, outline possible risks and ways to minimize the risks), and procedures and rules for safe play. Students must receive instruction on the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.

- Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for parent/guardian communication and permission (for example, the location of an off-site activity, description of the activity and physical environment, means of transportation, inherent risks of the activity, supervision).
- Prior to participation, the Teacher must reference and apply their school board's policy on equity and inclusion as it affects student participation and makes appropriate accommodations/modifications to provide a safe learning environment. Consult the Intent subsection within the [About section](#).

Teacher Awareness/Preparation

- Activities must be modified according to the age, ability level, language, and experience of students, number of participants, and the facility available.
- Previous training, fitness level, and the length of time and intensity of physical activity must be taken into consideration.
- Activities must be based on skills that are taught.
- Skills must be taught in proper progression.
- A warm-up and cool-down must be included.
- Teachers and all individuals who assist the Teacher with the activity must be aware of the possibility of pressuring Students. Students must be informed not to coerce a reluctant student into participating in any component of the activity with which they display or vocalize reluctance.
- When a student displays or vocalizes reluctance about participation, at any time, before or during any component of the activity, they must be provided with alternative ways to participate in the activity (for example, permit Students to select a role within the activity, remain at or return to a different component of the activity, break down new experiences/ components into smaller steps, be introduced to a new component with which they are comfortable).
- Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
- Demonstration of proficiency of skills must occur in a pool, shallow water, calm lakefront or sheltered bay.

- Prior to participation all Teachers and all individuals who assist with the watercraft activity (e.g. Qualified Instructors/Trip Guides) must be aware of Students who have no or limited swim ability/experience in the environment in which the activity takes place (for example, lakes, ponds, rivers) (Refer to [**Sample Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form**](#)).
- Teachers and all individuals who assist with the watercraft activity (e.g. Qualified Instructors/Trip Guides) must be aware of Students who have none or limited swim ability/experience (Refer to [**Sample Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form**](#)). and/or display or express hesitancy in the watercraft. The Teacher/Qualified Instructor must include additional program modifications (for example, consider the placement of Students based on their experience and comfort level, placing student with or near the Teacher/Qualified Instructor/Steersperson, and/or outfitting the student in a PFD or lifejacket with increased buoyancy).
- Elementary Students must not act as drummers.

Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire

- Prior to the activity, the Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form must be completed (Refer to [**Sample Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form**](#)).
- The Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form must be completed within the school year in which the activity is taking place.
- Results of the Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form must be documented and communicated as per school board policy (for example, to the student, Teacher, Principal, Parents/Guardians, Trip Guide(s), Volunteers, Lifeguards, and Outside Provider [as applicable]).
- The Swim Ability and Swim Comfort Assessment Questionnaire Form must be completed and submitted, or the student must not participate in the activity.

Steersperson Skills

- Every boat requires a qualified steersperson.
- Steersperson may sit or stand while steering.

- Steersperson is the in-charge person outranking all persons in the boat.
- Steersperson must be an employee of the Dragon Boat facility or approved by the Dragon Boat facility.
- Steersperson for each boat must demonstrate the following knowledge and skills:
 - steersperson must read and understand [Transport Canada's Safe Boating Guide](#).
 - be able to manage the team and exercise authority over team members
 - load the boat
 - balance the boat
 - maintain a straight course at full racing speed with a full crew of 18-20 paddlers plus drummer
 - steer a figure eight course around two buoys at normal speed with a full crew, in both directions, or in the absence of buoys, steer a set course which includes both left and right angled turns
 - execute sideways manoeuvres without going forwards
 - turn the boat through 360 degrees in both directions without the use of paddlers
 - guide the boat forward in a straight line without the use of paddlers
 - guide the boat in reverse for 50m (164') with the use of paddlers
 - execute an emergency stop from racing speed to full stop
 - execute safe approaches to a jetty/pontoon/docks in still and windy conditions
 - manage the unloading of the team members

- secure the boat and determine that all gear is put away correctly.

Safety Rules and Emergency Procedures

- All Teachers/Qualified Instructors/Monitors must be knowledgeable of the established safety rules, and emergency procedures (for example capsize/swamp procedures).
- Prior to participation, Students must be familiar with safety rules and emergency procedures specific to the watercraft activity in which they will participate (for example, PFD/lifejacket requirements, buddy responsibilities, capsize/swamp procedures, staying with the boat to use it as a life raft).
- After initial instruction, Students must demonstrate the ability to select a correctly fitting PFD/lifejacket and to properly secure/fasten it.
- Students must be informed of the location of available safety equipment and how to use it.
- Before the start of each session, all paddlers are required to pair up with the paddler beside them, in case of emergencies (buddy system). The first pair is also responsible for the drummer and the last pair for the Steersperson.
- Should Students require assistance at any time during the session, the drummer or Steersperson must raise their hand, accompanied by a series of three short bursts through the sounding device provided to signal the first aid provider/safety boat.
- Steersperson must be able to use, and crew must correctly respond to common dragon boat racing commands.
- Before the start of each session, the Teacher/Qualified Instructor must inform appropriate personnel (for example, facility's staff member) of the beginning and ending time on water.
- If standards vary between the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education and an activity provider, implement the higher standards.

- Teachers must be aware of the site's Emergency Action Plan (EAP), including the Site Specific Rescue Plan, and share with all Monitors and Participants.
- In case of emergency, procedures must be in place to ensure accountability for all boats, Teachers, monitors and Students on the water.
- In case of an emergency, a predetermined return route must be established.
- A vehicle for emergency purposes must be available.
- An individual must be designated (for example, Teacher or Parent) to transport an injured student to the hospital. This must not be the Teacher/Trip Guide responsible for the excursion.
- In the event that a boat is swamped, the following procedures must be followed:
 - Steersperson must be aware of any special conditions (for example, medical conditions, swim ability/swim comfort) that may apply to an individual paddler.
 - Steersperson must take charge of the crew until the motorized safety boat arrives.
 - The crew must hold onto the boat (Students must be instructed not to swim to shore).
 - Students must determine that their partner is in view (buddy system).
 - Students must inform the Steersperson if their partner is missing (buddy system).
 - The approach of the safety boat must not endanger (for example, trap) any participants in the water.
 - Students must follow Steersperson/first aid provider instructions.
 - If the boat has sufficient flotation – crew must get into the boat and paddle to shore. If not, hang onto boat and follow instructions of Steersperson.

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.
- The type of supervision must be commensurate with the inherent risk of the activity. The level of risk is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, and environmental conditions.
- On-Site Supervision is required during the safety and initial skill instruction.
- On-Site Supervision is required by the Teacher when a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring.
- On-Site Supervision is required when students are moving and handling equipment (e.g., lifting, portaging carries, launching and removing watercraft(s) to and from the water).
- On-Site Supervision is required for the duration of all other components of the activity (e.g., equipment setup and take down, warm-ups/cool downs, application of the skills and games).
- A Volunteer, under the direction of a Teacher, can monitor students during physical education activities. Refer to your school board's policy on Volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.
- Responsibilities must be clearly outlined for additional Teachers and Volunteers who are monitoring the activity.
- Where a Qualified Instructor is used and the Teacher is not directly with the Qualified Instructor, the Qualified Instructor must provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the safe application of skills and student behaviour for the duration of the activity.

Supervision/Monitoring Ratios

- For the initial on-the-water instruction, the Teacher/Qualified Instructor-to-student ratio is 1:10.
- After the initial instruction there must be 2 Teachers/Monitors per boat. One Teacher/Monitor is in the dragon boat and the other Teacher/Monitor is on land or in the motorized safety boat maintaining visual contact.

Qualifications

Steersperson Qualifications

- The dragon boat steersperson must possess one of the following qualifications:
 - Dragon Boat Canada's Steering Accreditation Course
 - Attendance at a clinic or workshop within the last three years provided by an instructor who is knowledgeable of the activity (for example, appropriate skills and progressions) and where safety is addressed as outlined in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education.
 - Past experience within the last 3 years as a steersperson in dragon boat racing, having knowledge of the activity (for example, appropriate skills and progressions) and where safety is addressed as outlined in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education.

Dragon Boat Instructor Qualifications

- One Qualified Instructor must have one of the following current certifications:
 - minimum ORCKA Canadian Style Paddling Level 1 (tandem) or Basic Canoeing Instructor
 - demonstrate competencies listed for steersperson in Special Rules/Instructions column
 - certification as required by Dragon Boat Canada

Lifeguard Qualifications

- A Lifeguard must be 18 years of age or older and possess a current (the date on the certificate must not be older than two years) Lifeguard certificate issued by one of the following organizations:
 - Lifesaving Society – National Lifeguard – Pool/Waterfront
 - Equivalent certificate approved by Minister of Health and Long Term Care
- A student may not act as a Lifeguard if they are participating in the activity.
- A student may not act as a Lifeguard if they are participating in the activity.

First Aid

- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult [Sample First Aid Kit](#))
- A working communication device (for example, cell phone) must be accessible.
- At least one Teacher/Monitor must have a minimum of a current (not more than three years prior to the day on which the holder is on duty) first aid certificate (standard or higher) issued by one of the following agencies: St. John Ambulance; Canadian Red Cross; Lifesaving Society; Canadian Ski Patrol; or an organization whose certificate is deemed equivalent by the medical officer of health in the local health unit.
- Follow the school's first aid emergency response ((consult [First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response](#)) and the school board's concussion protocol (consult [Concussions](#))).
- An emergency action plan and response to deal with evacuations and lockdowns, including specific direction for participants with accessibility needs, must be followed and communicated to all students.☐

Definitions

- **In-charge Person:**
 - Some activities refer to an "In-Charge" person. While the teacher is in-charge and responsible for the overall safety and well-being of students under their care, sometimes there are other personnel who must be identified as "In-Charge" related to specific situations (for example, a pool lifeguard). In activities where an "In-Charge" person is designated, that person, in consultation with the teacher, must make final decisions regarding safety of the students
- **Instructional Time:**
 - Time during which there is formal instruction and/or instructor led activities. Examples of instructional time are lessons, events, practice, and games.
- **Lifejacket:**

- Canadian-approved lifejackets are designed to turn an unconscious or incapacitated person face-up in the water. Lifejackets are available with varying amounts of flotation and turning ability. Canadian approved Lifejackets are stamped or labelled indicating that they are approved by Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

- **Monitor:**

- An individual who assists the Teacher with a group of students, (e.g., Volunteer, Qualified Instructor) and has a responsibility to monitor student behaviors for the duration of the activity.

- **Monitoring:**

- The role of monitoring is to observe, identify, act, and report:
 - Observe: Observe with attention to detail the actions of the students.
 - Identify: Identify the student and the unsafe behaviour.
 - Act: Take appropriate actions to safeguard students and others (e.g., stop the activity).
 - Report: Provide the name of the student and the unsafe behaviour to the teacher for management and direction.

- **Outside Activity Provider:**

- A commercial company, volunteer organization, or individual, not associated with the school board, who possess the required qualifications to provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the duration of an activity.

- **Personal Flotation Device (P.F.D.):**

- Canadian-approved P.F.D.'s are designed for use in recreational boating and are generally smaller, less bulky and more comfortable than lifejackets. They may have less flotation than lifejackets and may have no or little self-turning ability (the ability to turn an unconscious or incapacitated person face-up in the water). Canadian approved P.F.D.'s are stamped or labelled indicating that they are approved by Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

- **Qualified Instructor:**

- An individual who provides safety and skill instruction, and monitoring for an activity, and possesses the required qualifications (e.g., experience, certifications). This role could be fulfilled by a teacher, volunteer, or an employee of an outside provider. An instructor does not have the authority to supervise.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for management or direction. Activities, facilities, and equipment have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
- The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education includes three Types of supervision, Direct Supervision, On-Site Supervision, and In-the-Area Supervision. These types of supervision take into consideration the level of risk, which is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, the environmental conditions, the age, and developmental stage.
- The three types of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that activities require and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.
- Some activities in OPASSE transition from one type of supervision to another type of supervision (e.g., Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision OR On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision).

- **Teacher:**

- A person with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board (i.e., teacher, vice-principal, principal). This person is legally responsible for the students and has the authority and responsibility to supervise.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Direct Supervision:**

- Direct Supervision requires that the Teacher is physically present at the activity, providing visual and verbal oversight for management and direction of both, the activity and student safety.

- **Provisos:**

- No other activity can occur when part of the activity or the entire activity is under Direct Supervision when there is only one Teacher supervising.
- The Supervision section of the relevant activity safety standards page in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education describes when parts of an activity are under Direct Supervision.
- Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for one activity and requires the Teacher to be present at that activity for management and direction.

- **An activity may be under Direct Supervision:**

- During the entire duration of the activity;
- During the set up and take down of equipment; .
- During the safety and initial skill instruction;
- During the performance/practice of the activity skill; and
- When the activities transition from Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision.

- **In-the-Area Supervision:**

- The Teacher is located in proximity to a combination of locations where the student activities take place, is circulating, and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.

- **Provisos:**

- The Teacher is circulating between the activities occurring at separate locations, and is readily accessible, or the location of the Teacher is communicated to the student.
- Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and skill and instruction and is monitoring at a combination of locations, the Teacher is located in proximity to where the student activities take place, is circulating between the activity locations, and is accessible for management and direction.
- Students may be out of sight for periods of time.
- An activity or a component of the activity is under In-the-Area Supervision:
 - Where the same activity is located in separate locations (e.g., Fitness activities);
 - Where two or more activities under In-the-Area Supervision occur in separate locations (e.g., Badminton, Table Tennis, Handball (Wall));
 - Where the skill application of the activity takes place at a separate location from the teacher (e.g., Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine), Cycling, hiking on trails);
 - When the activities occur in double or triple gymnasiums; and
 - Where more than one Qualified Instructor is providing activities at a combination of locations.
- **On-Site Supervision:**
 - The Teacher is present at one location where the student activity takes place (e.g., gymnasium, sports field, climbing wall at an Outside Activity Provider's facility, campsite) and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - Provisos:

- Where more than one activity occurs in one location, the Teacher is circulating between the activities and is accessible for management and direction.
- Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (e.g., equipment room, outdoor storage shed, boathouse, staff tent) is considered to be On-Site Supervision.
- Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for an activity or a combination of activities at one location and the Teacher is present and is circulating and accessible for management and direction.
- An activity may be under On-Site Supervision:
 - During the entire duration of the activity;
 - During the safety and initial skill instruction;
 - With activities using multiple stations while the Teacher is circulating;
 - When combining two or more activities at one location while the Teacher is circulating; and
 - When activities transition from On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision.

- **Volunteer:**

- A responsible adult (e.g., Educational Assistants, Retired Teachers, Co-op Students, Parents/Guardians, Teacher Candidates) approved by the Principal/Designate who is under the direction of a Teacher and has been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities. Refer to your school board's policy on volunteers assisting with student's physical activities.

Last Published
Fri, 09/26/25 04:57 pm