

Summary of the September 2022 revisions to the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education (OPASSE)

The following document contains a **summary*** of the changes to the OPASSE for the 2022-2023 school year.

***Note:** This document is not an exhaustive summary of all changes and is not meant to replace reviewing all information related to the activity prior to commencing an activity.

Legend

E_C = Elementary Curricular

E_IM = Elementary Intramural

E_IS = Elementary Interschool

S_C = Secondary Curricular

S_IM = Secondary Intramural

S_IS = Secondary Interschool

Revisions to Boilerplates

Boilerplates are safety standards that are applicable to multiple activity safety standards and may be applied across the different settings (curricular, interschool, intramurals). An example of a boilerplate within the Equipment section of an activity safety standards is: "Determine that all equipment is safe for use (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters). Students must be encouraged to report equipment problems to the teacher."

Revisions that may be applicable to curricular, interschool, or intramural safety standards

Facilities

Portable Goalposts

Previous safety standards:

The netting on goal posts must conform to the sport governing organization or the local athletic association regulations.

Updated to:

The netting on goalposts must not present a hazard (for example, tripping, strangulation). Where appropriate netting is not available, refrain from using netting.

Rational:

To increase clarity for teachers/intramural supervisors/coaches. Wording was updated to reflect the hazards of netting on goalposts for an activity. The hazards and appropriate netting should be considered when determining whether to use netting.

Permanent Goalposts

Previous safety standards:

The netting on goal posts must conform to the local athletic association regulations.

Updated to:

The netting on goalposts must not present a hazard (for example, tripping, strangulation). Where appropriate netting is not available, refrain from using netting.

Rational:

To increase clarity for teachers/intramural supervisors/coaches. Wording was updated to reflect the hazards of netting on goalposts for an activity. The hazards and appropriate netting should be considered when determining whether to use netting.

Special Rules/Instructions

The Moving of Portable Goalposts

The following safety standard was relocated from the Facilities section to the Special Rules/Instructions section:

The teacher must provide instructions to the students regarding the safe movement of the portable goals. Only students who have been properly trained can assist the teacher with moving portable goals. Constant visual supervision is required.

The teacher must establish and direct students to a designated area, away from the path of the moving portable goals, to avoid students interfering/colliding with a moving portable goal.

Rational:

To increase clarity for teachers/intramural supervisors/coaches and provide consistent user experience. These safety standards were moved to the Special Rules/Instructions section since they are instructions about equipment for facilities and not about the facilities themselves.

School Board's Off-Site Activities Policies and Procedures

Previous safety standards:

Refer to the school board's transportation procedures related to communicating with parents/guardians the location of an off-site activity and the means of transportation used as well as to the need for obtaining parent/guardian permission.

Updated to:

Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for communication with parents/guardians, the location of an off-site activity, means of transportation, supervision ratios, and parent/guardian permission.

Rational:

To increase the clarity of off-site policies and procedures for teachers. The updated safety standard is more inclusive of the realities of school boards when it comes to school boards policies and procedures for an off-site activity, the supervision ratios and means of transportation.

Swim Test

Supervision Ratios for the Swim Test

Previous safety standards:

The supervision ratios required a minimum of 2 certified aquatic instructors for the swim test.

Updated to:

The supervision ratios require a minimum of 2 certified aquatic instructors or lifeguards for the swim test.

Rational:

This was an omission from the September 2021 edits when a certified lifeguard was added to the statement of who can administer the swim test. Certified lifeguard was added to the standards as per the Lifesaving Society since the National Lifeguards (NL) certification now allows administering the swim test.

Revisions that are applicable to all curricular safety standards

Special Rules/Instructions

Students with Special Needs: Prior to participation

Previous safety standard:

Students with Special Needs: Prior to participation the teacher must address student's safety concerns and make appropriate accommodations/modifications to provide a safe learning environment.

Updated to:

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.

Rational:

To increase teacher awareness and alignment in creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments for students. The updated standard ensures students' needs are considered and outlines the importance for

teachers to reference their school board's policy on equity and inclusion to ensure safe and inclusive learning environments for all students.

When a student displays hesitation

Previous safety standard:

When a student displays hesitation (verbally or non-verbally) with participating, the teacher must determine the reason(s) for doubt. If the teacher believes that a potential hesitancy during the skill could put the student at risk, the student must be directed toward a more basic skill, or be permitted to select a challenge at their comfort level, including the choice to not participate.

Updated to:

When a student displays hesitation (verbally or non-verbally) with participating, the teacher must determine the reason(s) for doubt. If the teacher believes that a potential hesitancy during the skill could put the student at risk, the student must be directed toward a more basic skill, or be permitted to select a role within the activity at their comfort level, including the choice to not participate.

Rational:

To reflect current practices/structures in schools, this safety standard was updated to remove allowing a student to “be permitted to select a challenge at their comfort level” to allowing a student to “select a role within the activity”. The updated standard reinforces the importance of providing opportunities for all students to be included in an activity at a level where they feel safe and can be successful.

Revisions to Activity Pages

E_C, E_IM, S_C, S_IM - Dodgeball

Special Rules/Instructions

A new safety standard has been included:

Be aware of students wearing medical aids (for example, glasses, hearing aids). Make accommodations to include and protect students when participating.

Rational:

To reflect current practices/structures in schools, this safety standard was included to increase clarity for teachers/intramural supervisors/coaches when making accommodations for students wearing medical aids.

Added to statement “Contact with the ball must be below the target’s waist”:

Examples to assist in controlling flight direction of ball toward ‘below the waist’ and velocity of the throw:

- Institute a rule whereby the ball must hit the floor/ground before it comes in contact with the target. Where any thrown ball does not hit the floor first and hits a target the thrower must move to another active part of the activity.
- Institute a rule where the thrower moves to another active part of the activity if the target is hit above the waist.
- Have throwers throw with their non dominant hand.
- Increase the throwing distance from the dividing line between the two teams.
- Where applicable, for example, Kings Court, give students the option to choose to be only the throwers.

Rational:

To reflect current practices/structures in schools, this safety standard was updated to provide information, clarification and examples to address a teachers' pedagogy in presenting the dodgeball game and a students' emotional and physical safety.

E_C, E_IM, S_C, S_IM – Orienteering

Supervision

The following was removed:

Off-Site Supervision Ratios

Rational:

The previous off-site supervision ratios prevented teachers from taking students to approved facilities and participating in orienteering as current class sizes can exceed the ratios without additional support from staff to meet the current ratios. Additionally, when teachers take students off-site it may cross over to school boards' field trip policies that inform supervision ratios. Consequently, the safety standard for school board policies and procedures for communication with parents/guardians within

the Special Rules/Instructions section has been updated to include referring to the school board policies and procedures for off-site supervision ratios.

New Activity Pages

S_C, S_IM – Tandem Cycling

Rational:

A new activity page for Tandem Cycling was added to the list of OPASSE activities as a result of an external request. This activity page is only to be used when planning tandem cycling for students who are visually impaired or blind. The new activity page will increase clarity for teachers and staff members/volunteers who are trained to be a suitable tandem pilot in the school related context.

New Tools & Resources

Sample Checklist to Identify and Minimize Risk for Activities not Included in OPASSE

Rational:

To increase clarity for teachers/intramural supervisors/coaches. Since all activities are not included in OPASSE a new sample checklist to Identify and Minimize Risk for Activities not included in OPASSE has been included in the Tools & Resources section. The checklist will support teachers/intramural supervisors/coaches to consider the aspects of safety in the instance if an activity does not appear in the safety standards.

About

Intent

Previous intent statement:

The intent of the OPASSE in Education is to provide information that will assist teachers/coaches/intramural supervisors/school administrators to focus on safe instructional practices for each activity in order to minimize the inherent element of risk. By implementing safe instructional practices, such as use of logical teaching progressions, as well as inclusion of age-appropriate activities in program preparations, planning and daily

teaching, teachers/coaches/intramural supervisors will guard against foreseeable risks. It is hoped that through this implementation process, this information will assist teachers/coaches/intramural supervisors/school administrators in fulfilling their obligation to provide the safest possible environment in which all students, regardless of physical, mental, emotional abilities/challenges or cultural background, can be physically active.

Updated to:

The intent of the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education (OPASSE) is to contribute to an equitable, inclusive and safe education system by providing information and direction that will assist teachers/coaches/intramural supervisors/school administrators with the safe implementation of physical activities for all students to minimize the inherent element of risk.

The information provided in the OPASSE will assist teachers/coaches/intramural supervisors/school administrators in fulfilling their obligation to provide a safe environment while promoting and upholding Indigenous rights and human rights. This includes establishing a physically and emotionally safe environment, treating students equitably and with respect, being sensitive to factors that influence individual student learning, understanding systemic barriers that impact students, and preventing and responding to discrimination and harassment. These actions will ensure that every student's right to education is respected and realized, and all members of the school community are welcome and included.

By establishing an equitable, inclusive, and safe learning environment, implementing safe instructional practices, such as the use of logical teaching progressions, as well as the selection of age-appropriate activities in program preparations that take into account the diverse needs of all students and in which all students can safely engage, teachers/coaches/intramural supervisors/school administrators will guard against foreseeable risks.

Rational:

The intent of the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education has been revised to remove references that target specific groups, and replaced with more inclusive language that aligns with the Ontario Human Rights Code and current Ministry of Education policy.

Outdoor Education Activities

E_C, E_IM, S_C, S_IM – Canoeing & Canoe Tripping

Updates:

Safety standards for Outdoor Education Canoeing and Canoe Tripping activities were updated to clarify the standards and bring awareness to teachers. The following sections have been updated or include new safety standards:

- Introduction to activity
 - Additional information for multi-day trips and swimming has been provided.
- Equipment
 - Additional standards regarding paddles, means of hydration and set of maps/GPS unit have been added
- Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery
 - The current standards have been updated to assist with clarity.
 - Articles (for example, jewellery and clothing) that could become tangled, caught or cause injury or restrict the student in the event of an emergency must not be worn have been added.
- Facilities
 - Additional safety standards have been added for establishing routes, considerations for age/skill level of students and environmental and sanitary practices.
- Special Rules/Instructions
 - The language of the Canoeing Skills has been updated from teaching skills to show proficiency of the skills.
 - Additional safety standards have been added to inform parents/guardians about correctly fitting and Transport Canada approved P.F.D./lifejacket. Signal systems must be in place between boats and a map of route and excursion itinerary must be included. Additionally the load capacity rating must not be exceeded.
- Supervision
 - Supervision ratios have been updated.
- Qualifications
 - Water Safety Supervisor has been included to the safety standards.
- Swim Test
 - For further clarity, all teachers, trip guides and parent/guardian/volunteers must be aware of those students who required a P.F.D./lifejacket to complete the swim test.

- Definitions
 - The role of Assistant Trip Guide and Water Safety Supervisor have been included in the list of definitions as they are mentioned throughout the activity safety standards.

Rational:

To increase clarity for teachers/intramural supervisors and to ensure consistency with both canoeing and canoe tripping, standards have been updated. Since the updates to the Canoeing and Canoe Tripping supervision and qualifications from September 2021, other sections of the safety standards had been identified requiring updates. It was necessary to add/update the entire canoeing activity pages for schools/school boards to reference.

E_C, E_IM, S_C, S_IM – Canoeing

A new safety standard “Information for Students” has been included:

Prior to the trip, students must receive explicit instruction by a trip guide or teacher on the following:

- Suitable clothing systems (for example, fabrics, recommend layering principles, avoiding cotton, appropriate items) and packing
- Canoeing equipment
- Environmental concerns (for example, wildlife, weather, low impact camping, poison ivy/oak)
- The trip itinerary (route, distances, evacuation points)
- An adequate supply of safe water for one day (the group must have a water purification method and must be made aware of water sources prior to embarking on trip)
- Water safety for canoeing and swimming (if there will be swimming on the trip)
- Safety procedures related to:
 - severe weather conditions (for example, wind, lightning [consult Weather]); and
 - ways to protect themselves from environmental conditions (for example use of hats, sunscreen, sunglasses, personal water bottles, insect repellent, appropriate clothing).

Rational:

To increase clarity for teacher/intramural supervisors about the information that must be communicated to the students prior to the trip.

E_C, E_IM, S_C, S_IM – Canoeing Tripping

Please note that over the course of the 2022-2023 school year Ophea will continue to review the Wilderness Advanced First Aid qualifications and any updates to the qualifications would be made in 2023.

Updates:

CPR certifications for Trip Guides and Assistant Trip Guides have been updated to the CPR C certification.

A new safety standard “Information for Parents/Guardians” has been included:

- A consent form must be completed, signed and returned, giving permission for the student to participate in a swim test and in canoeing.
- All students will wear a correctly fitting and Transport Canada approved PFD/lifejacket, with whistle attached, when near, in or on the water.
- Students must complete and pass the following swim test in its entirety, in sequence and without any stops, with or without a PFD:
 - Rolling entry (backwards or forward) into deep water at 2.75m (9') minimum depth
 - Tread water for 1 minute
 - Swim 50m (164') continuously any stroke

Rational:

To increase clarity for teacher/intramural supervisors. A CPR certification is only applicable to adults while CPR C is applicable to adults, children, and infants. “Information for Parents/Guardians” was added to increase clarity about the information that must be communicated to the parents/guardians prior to the trip.

E_C, E_IM, S_C, S_IM – Swimming

Updates:

The Outdoor Education (Swimming) safety standards have been separated into the 3 following different safety standard pages:

- Swimming - Instructional
 - Instructional swimming at Designated Swim areas in lakes, ponds and rivers. Instructional time is defined as time during which there are organized activities or instructions. Examples of instructional time are swimming lessons, swim events, practices and games.
- Swimming - Leisure
 - Leisure swimming at Designated and Non-Designated Swim areas in lakes, ponds and rivers (e.g., camps, municipal swim areas)

- Swimming - on Watercraft and Land-based Trips
 - Swimming at Non-Designated swim areas in lakes, ponds and rivers during single day or multi-day watercraft trips (e.g., Canoe, Kayak, Stand Up Paddleboard) and single day or multi-day land-based trips (e.g., Backpacking/ Hiking, Camping)

Rational:

To increase clarity for teachers/intramural supervisors of the safety standards for swimming in different settings. The supervision ratios and qualifications have been updated on the swimming pages to reflect the different settings occurring on each swimming page.

Phase-in Safety Standards for 2023-2024

Supervision Definition

Current definition:

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for regulation 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 designate three categories of supervision, Constant visual supervision, On-site supervision, and In-the-area supervision. The categories take into consideration the risk level of the activity, the participants' skill level and the participants' maturity. The three levels of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that an activity requires and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.

Will be updated to:

- The vigilant overseeing of 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 designate three categories of supervision, Direct supervision, On-site supervision, and In-the-area supervision. The categories 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, and age and developmental stage.
- The three levels of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that activity requires and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.

- The nature of some activities in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education transition from one type of supervision to another type of supervision (for example, Direct supervision to On-Site or On-Site to In the Area).

Rational:

To increase clarity and assist school boards and teachers/intramural supervisors/coaches, the supervision definition along with the application to the activities will be updated and implemented in September 2023 (consult Types of Supervision definitions updates within this document). An improper type of supervision for an activity can lead to student injury and may lead to teacher, principal, school board being named in a negligence suit.

Types of Supervision Definitions

Please note that “Constant Visual Supervision” will change to “Direct supervision”.

Current definitions:

- Constant Visual Supervision:
 - Constant visual supervision means that the teacher is physically present, watching the activity in question. Only one activity requiring “Constant visual” supervision may take place while other activities are going on.
 - Curricular example: During a track and field session, some students are involved in high jump, some are practicing relay passing on the track while a third group is distance running around the school. For high jump, the teacher is at the high jump area and is observing the activity.
 - Intramural example: During a school outdoor special events day, some students are involved in parachute games, some in relay games, and others in a team scavenger hunt around the school. For parachute, the intramural supervisor is at the event and is observing activity.
- In-the-area Supervision:
 - In-the-area supervision means that the teacher could be in the gymnasium while another activity is taking place in an area adjacent to the gymnasium. In-the-area supervision requires the teacher to be readily accessible.
 - In-the-area supervision occurs:
 - in activities in which students may be out of sight for periods of time and the location of the teacher is not nearby (for example, alpine skiing, cross-country running). At least one of the following criteria must be in place:

- The teacher is circulating
- The location of teacher has been communicated to students and volunteers
 - in single activities and those that may be combined (for example, other in- the- area activities such as badminton, table tennis, handball – wall) with the following criteria in place:
 - The teacher must be circulating between the activities and readily accessible
 - The teacher informs students of the location of the activities
- Curricular example: During a track and field session, some students are involved in high jump, some are practicing relay passing on the track while a third group is distance running around the school. For distance running, the students are running around the school and at times may be out of sight.
- Intramural example: During a school outdoor special events day, some students are involved in parachute games, some in relay games, and others in a team scavenger hunt around the school. For a scavenger hunt, the students are running around the school grounds and at times may be out of sight.
- On-site Supervision:
 - On-site supervision entails teacher presence but not necessarily constantly viewing one specific activity. Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (for example, equipment room) to the gym is considered part of “on-site supervision”.
 - Curricular example: During a track and field session, some students are involved in high jump, some are practicing relay passing on the track while a third group is distance running around the school. For a relay, the students are practicing on the track and can be seen by the teacher who is with the high jumpers.
 - Intramural example: During a school outdoor special events day, some students are involved in parachute games, some in relay games, and others in a team scavenger hunt around the school. For relay games, the students are participating on the playground and can be seen by the intramural supervisor.

Will be updated to:

- Direct Supervision:
 - Direct Supervision requires that the teacher is physically present at the activity providing constant visual oversight for management and direction of both activity and student safety.

- When part of the activity or the entire activity is under direct supervision with one teacher supervising no other activity can occur.
 - When there are two or more teachers/ supervisors other activities can occur with one teacher supervising the part of the activity that is under direct supervision.
 - The Supervision section of the relevant activity page in OPASSE describes when parts of an activity are under Direct Supervision.
 - An activity may be under Direct Supervision during:
 - The entire duration of the activity
 - Set up and take down of equipment
 - Initial skill and safety instruction
 - Performance/practice of the activity skill
 - When activities transition from Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision
- On-Site Supervision:
 - The teacher is present at **ONE** location where student activity takes place (e.g., gym, sports fields) and accessible for providing management and direction of physical activity and student safety.
 - Where more than one activity occurs in the 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) is considered to be on-site.
 - An activity may be under On-site Supervision:
 - During the entire duration of the activity
 - During initial skill and safety instruction
 - With activities using multiple stations while teacher circulates
 - When combining two or more activities at one location while teacher circulates
 - When activities transition from On-Site Supervision to In the Area Supervision

- In-the-Area Supervision:
 - The teacher is located in proximity to where student activities take place (e.g., at one or combination of locations) and accessible for providing management and direction of physical activity and student safety.
 - The teacher is circulating between activities and readily accessible or the location of the teacher is communicated to the student.
 - Students may be out of sight for periods of time.
 - An activity may be under In-the-Area Supervision:
 - When combining an activity that requires On Site supervision with an activity that requires In the Area supervision at the same location
 - When activities occur in Double/Triple gyms
 - When combined with other In-the-Area activities (at one location or two locations)

Rational:

To increase clarity and assist school boards and teachers/intramural supervisors/coaches, the supervision definitions along with the application to the activities will be updated and implemented in September 2023. An improper type of supervision for an activity can lead to student injury and may lead to teacher, principal, school board being named in a negligence suit. Definitions of constant visual (will be updated to direct supervision), on-site and in-the-area are located on each one of the activities – curricular, interschool and intramural. Since each activity must have the appropriate type of supervision for the activity, it is important for the users, (teachers, coaches, supervisors) of the safety standards to put into effect the appropriate type of supervision as defined and applied to the activity.