

Summary of the September 2026 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 2026-2027 school year. If you have any questions regarding the changes, please email Ask Ophea at safety@ophea.net

***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

Removal of Outdoor Education Classification

The Outdoor Education classification from the list of elementary and secondary activities has been removed to make the activity safety standards easier for users to navigate. This change is particularly helpful for users browsing the activity dropdown menu, including those accessing the standards on a mobile device. Activities such as kayaking, camping, and hiking will be easier to locate when they are listed alphabetically.

Removing the classification eliminates any unintended suggestion that activities previously listed under Outdoor Education are appropriate only within Outdoor Education courses or clubs. Instead, it broadens the range of activities teachers may consider when planning physical education and other school-based learning opportunities.

As part of this update, the Outdoor Education General Procedures page has also been removed.

Inclusive Language Review

The terminology used across all OPASSE activities and Tools & Resources has been reviewed to identify and begin the process of updating binary references. Binary terms have been replaced with more inclusive terminology that better reflects the diversity of individuals within Ontario's education system.

These updates align with the intent of OPASSE to contribute to an equitable, inclusive, and safe education system by supporting environments that are welcoming, respectful, and inclusive for all members of the school community. The review was informed through consultation with subject matter experts and considered opportunities to align terminology with current practices and partner organizations where appropriate. This work is ongoing, and the updates improve the consistency and inclusiveness of language across OPASSE while maintaining the intent and application of the safety standards.

Revisions to Interschool Coaching Qualifications

The coaching qualification requirements for interschool activities have been updated to reinforce the importance of ensuring that coaches have the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to support safe participation.

The revised requirements continue to recognize multiple pathways for demonstrating coaching competency, including recent participation in an activity-specific clinic or workshop and previous coaching experience. A new mentorship pathway has also been introduced, allowing coaches to qualify by completing a full-season mentorship under the guidance of an experienced coach, with approval from the Principal/Designate.

The requirements for coach education courses have also been broadened. Rather than identifying specific National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) courses, the standards now recognize sport-specific coach education offered by national or provincial sport organizations, school boards, local athletic associations, or similar organizations. These courses must address sport-specific skills, skill progressions, and safety procedures.

The updates provide greater flexibility, reflect current coaching practices, and maintain a strong focus on sport-specific knowledge and safety.

Revisions to the Curricular and Intramural Special Rules/Instructions Section

As part of the OPASSE review cycle, the Special Rules/Instructions section across curricular and intramural activities have been updated to improve the structure, reduce variability, and strengthen alignment across activities. Safety standards are now organized into consistent subsections, making them easier for teachers to find, understand, and apply when making timely, in-the-moment safety decisions. It uses a layered approach that combines generic standards applicable across all activities with activity-specific standards tailored to a particular activity or group of activities.

All curricular and intramural activities will now include three core Special Rules/Instructions subsections: Student Medical Information, School Board Policies and Procedures, and Teacher Awareness and Preparation. Where applicable, an additional activity-specific subsection will address areas such as Moving Equipment, Spotting, as well as Safety Rules and Emergency Procedures.

Concussion Tools and Resources

In August 2025, Ophea's concussion protocol was updated to align with the evidence-based recommendations outlined in the [6th International Consensus Statement](#) on Concussion in Sport (June 2023), following the international conference held in Amsterdam in October 2022. To support the updated protocol, Ophea collaborated with Parachute Canada and PedsConcussion to develop a booklet and printable poster to

complement the information on the Return to Learn and Return to Physical Activity Stages. The booklet and poster can be downloaded online in colour and/or grayscale under the General Information section within the [Return to Learn and Return to Physical Activity Stages](#) of the Concussion Tool.

In addition, three charts are in development and will be available in September 2026:

- [Chart 1: Identification of a Suspected Concussion](#)
- [Chart 2a: Diagnosed Concussion – Return to School Plan \(Stages 1-2\)](#)
- [Chart 2b: Diagnosed Concussion – Return to School Plan \(Stages 3-6\)](#)

New Activity Pages

S_C, E_C, S_IM, E_IM – Gaga Ball

Rationale:

New activity pages for Gaga Ball was added to the list of OPASSE activities as a result of multiple requests from school boards due to its growing popularity across Ontario. Adding Gaga ball supports schools with the safe implementation of Physical Education and Intramural programming to minimize the inherent element of risk.

Revisions to Activity Pages

All Interschool Activities

Supervision

Previous safety standard:

- When students are competing outside their school district (e.g., travel tournaments, regional/ provincial competitions):
 - a Community Coach Liaison from the same school board must be accessible to the Community Coach; and
 - consult school board and local athletic association rules and regulations with regard to Coach, Community Coach, and Community Coach Liaison duties and adhere to the higher standard of care.

Updated to:

When students are competing outside their school district (e.g., travel tournaments, regional/ provincial competitions) a Community Coach Liaison from the same school board must be accessible to the Community Coach.

Rationale:

This update clarifies the safety standard by retaining the specific requirement for a Community Coach Liaison to be accessible when students compete outside their school district, while reinforcing that school board policies are the primary source of direction.

The "consult school board and local athletic association rules and regulations with regard to Coach, Community Coach, and Community Coach Liaison duties and adhere to the higher standard of care" standard was removed because school boards are responsible for developing their own safety policies and may establish requirements that exceed OPASSE. School staff and coaches should therefore consult and follow their school board policies, including any applicable athletic association requirements.

All Activities

Introduction

Previous safety standard:

- 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](#).

Updated to:

- When an Outside Activity Provider is used:
 - The safety standards for this activity must be presented to the Outside Activity Provider prior to the activity taking place.
 - The Teacher and the Outside Activity Provider must communicate and review the relevant Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education (OPASSE) activity safety standards and the Outside Activity Provider requirements. The Outside Activity Provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards.

- Where the Outside Activity Provider has additional requirements, these requirements must be followed. For more information on planning activities using an Outside Activity Provider, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).

Rationale:

This update clarifies the requirements that must be met when an Outside Activity Provider is used to provide the safety and skill instruction, and monitoring for an activity. The requirement has been moved from the Top Section of all activity pages to the Special Rules/Instructions section to support teacher planning for an activity. The update also provides additional information about the responsibilities of the teacher and the Outside Activity Provider in ensuring all safety requirements are identified, communicated, and in place when engaging students in the activity.

Environmental Conditions

Previous safety standard:

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.

Updated to:

At all times the school board's weather and insect procedures are the minimum standards.

Rationale:

This standard has been revised to remove redundant information already included on activity pages, which clarifies that the higher standard of care must be followed.

E_C, E_IM, S_C, S_IM – Cross Country Running, Mountain Biking, Orienteering, Skateboarding, Cycling, Skating (inline), Skating (Quad Roller)

Previous safety standard:

No audio devices (for example, MP3 players) may be used.

Updated to:

Audio devices must not pose a risk to students' safety (for example, when students need to be aware of their external surroundings).

Rationale:

The update clarifies that personal audio devices may be used once students have received the required skill and safety instruction, provided their use does not interfere with students' ability to receive instructions, monitor their surroundings, communicate with others, or carry out safety-related responsibilities. It also recognizes that the device and any related components, such as cords or headphones, must not create an additional safety risk.

This change helps prevent safety standards from unintentionally restricting access to audio devices, including assistive technologies that support communication, sensory regulation, attention, or participation. The revised standards allow educators to apply professional judgement based on the activity, environment, student needs, and potential risks, while supporting safe, inclusive, and appropriate use as technology continues to evolve.

E_C, E_IM, S_C, S_IM - Fitness Activities, S_C, S_IM - Weight Training

Previous safety standard:

Students may use personal audio devices with headphones after initial instruction on any equipment that does not require a spotter or ongoing instruction, or when students do not need to be aware of their external surroundings (for example, traffic on streets). The personal audio device must not pose a safety hazard (for example, headphone cord length).

Updated to:

- Personal audio devices may be used only after initial skill and safety instruction.
- Audio devices must not pose a risk to students' safety (for example, when students need to be aware of their external surroundings, when spotting other students).
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Rationale:

The update clarifies that personal audio devices may be used once students have received the required skill and safety instruction, provided their use does not interfere with students' ability to receive instructions,

monitor their surroundings, communicate with others, or carry out safety-related responsibilities. It also recognizes that the device and any related components, such as cords or headphones, must not create an additional safety risk.

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E_C, S_C, E_IM, S_IM - Paddle Rafting

Action and Rationale:

The Paddle Rafting pages have been updated to streamline and increase alignment and clarity across all activities. Updates are primarily focused on the Equipment and Special Rules/Instructions sections.

E_IM, S_IM - Target (Human), Target (Other)

Action:

Pages have been removed.

Rationale:

The activity pages have been removed because they duplicated more recently developed, activity-specific standards, including the updated Dodgeball and Disc Golf pages. Removing these duplicate pages helps ensure that information remains accurate, consistent, and easier to maintain, while making it simpler for users to find the most current guidance. This change does not limit participation in these activities, as the relevant safety standards remain available on the dedicated activity pages.

E_C, S_C, E_IM, S_IM - Flat water Kayaking

Previous safety standard:

- Paddle Canada
 - Sea Kayak Level-2 Skills
 - Intermediate River Kayak Skills
 - Flatwater River Kayak Instructor

- o Basic Kayak Instructor

Updated to:

- Paddle Canada
 - o Sea Kayak Level-2 Skills
 - o Intermediate River Kayak Skills
 - o Flatwater River Kayak Instructor
 - o Basic Kayak Instructor
 - o Certification as required by Canoe Kayak Canada (CKC)

Rationale:

The Certification as required by Canoe Kayak Canada (CKC) has been added to Instructor Qualifications as it is the equivalent to the Paddle Canada Instructor Qualifications.

E_C, E_IM - Kindergarten/Primary (Movement Activities), Kindergarten/Primary (Playground Structures), Kindergarten/Primary (Wheeled Activities)

Previous definition:

Monitor:

- o 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.

Updated to:

Monitor:

- o An individual who assists the Teacher with a group of students, (for example, Early Childhood Educators, Qualified Instructor, Volunteer) and has a responsibility to monitor student behaviors for the duration of the activity

Rationale:

The definition of monitor for kindergarten activities has been updated to include Early Childhood Educators, recognizing their role in supporting student supervision and activity participation.

Tools and Resources

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

The [Sample Checklist to Identify and Minimize Risk for Activities not Included in OPASSE](#) has been revised. It is no longer a checklist and has been renamed to “*Sample Tool to Identify and Minimize Risk for Activities not Included in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education.*” The revised version was designed to help teachers think about, identify, and minimize the risk of injury for all students when engaging in activities that are not included in, or do not resemble, an activity found in OPASSE, while also considering a physically and emotionally safe environment for every student.

The revision includes guiding questions related to sections on activity pages (for example, Equipment, Facilities, First Aid and Emergency Response) to help teachers gather relevant information, assess potential hazards, and minimize the risk of injury while supporting the participation of every student.

Coaches Responsibilities

The [Coaches Responsibilities](#) Tool and Resource has been revised.

Responsibility removed:

Consult school board and local athletic association rules and regulations (consult safety standards, code of conduct, first aid emergency response, concussion protocol, and transportation policy) and adhere to the higher standard of care

Rationale:

The "consult school board and local athletic association rules and regulations (consult safety standards, code of conduct, first aid emergency response, concussion protocol, and transportation policy) and adhere to the higher standard of care" statement was removed because school boards are responsible for developing their own safety policies and may establish requirements that exceed OPASSE. School staff and coaches should therefore consult and follow their school board policies, including any applicable athletic association requirements as governed by school board policies.

Requirements of the Educators

The [Requirements of the Educators](#) Tool and Resource has been revised.

Previous requirements:

- Provide the Outside Activity Provider with access to:
 - the relevant activity safety standards from the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education (OPASSE); and
 - the OPASSE requirements of the Outside Activity Provider.
- Prior to the activity, the Teacher and the Outside Activity Provider must communicate and review the relevant OPASSE activity safety standards and the requirements of the Outside Activity Provider.

Updated to:

- The safety standards for the activity must be presented to the Outside Activity Provider prior to the activity taking place. The teacher and the Outside Activity Provider must communicate and review the relevant OPASSE activity safety standards and the requirements of the Outside Activity Provider. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. Where the Outside Activity Provider has additional requirements, these requirements must be followed.

Rationale:

This update clarifies the information that teachers must provide to an Outside Activity Provider who is engaged to support the safety and skill instruction and monitoring for an activity. It also clarifies the responsibilities of the teacher and the Outside Activity Provider. The language has been updated to remove the reference to a “higher standard” and to clarify that all safety requirements, including those in OPASSE and any additional requirements of the Outside Activity Provider, are identified, communicated, and in place when engaging students in the activity.

Requirements of the Outside Activity Provider

The [Requirements of the Outside Activity Provider](#) Tool and Resource has been revised.

Previous requirement:

The Outside Activity Provider must agree to abide by the requirements of the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education (OPASSE) as outlined on the relevant activity safety standards and the Requirements of the Outside Activity Providers. In a situation where the Outside Activity Provider enforces a higher standard, that standard applies.

Updated to:

The safety standards for the activity must be presented to the Outside Activity Provider prior to the activity taking place. The teacher and the Outside Activity Provider must communicate and review the relevant OPASSE activity safety standards and the requirements of the Outside Activity Provider. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. Where the Outside Activity Provider has additional requirements, these requirements must be followed.

Rationale:

This update clarifies the information that teachers must provide to an Outside Activity Provider who is engaged to support the safety and skill instruction and monitoring for an activity. It also clarifies the responsibilities of the teacher and the Outside Activity Provider. The language has been updated to remove the reference to a “higher standard” and to clarify that all safety requirements, including those in OPASSE and any additional requirements of the Outside Activity Provider, are identified, communicated, and in place when engaging students in the activity.