



Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: Australian Sports Commission
Submitting as a: Government agency
State: ACT

Summary

The submission from the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) centres upon the principle that all young Australians have the right to an education that develops their full potential. Educational success ought to be defined by the extent to which it develops the whole person; their physical, psychological, cognitive and social capabilities.

The ASC welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this Review and hopes that appropriate attention will be given to:

1. Unpacking how all Australians, particularly young Australians, are supported to develop through an integrated and holistic approach to education
 - a. The ASC seeks to embed Physical Literacy as part of this focus, noting its potential to enhance educational outcomes. Beyond the health and wellbeing benefits, developing the physical capabilities of children and young people is proven to enhance performance in other academic pursuits.
2. Addressing the absence of reliable and coordinated approaches to data capture and reporting, which enable effective evidence based decision making
 - a. There is deficiency in the quality and consistency of monitoring, reporting and evaluation of physical activity/ physical literacy nationally. Through this review and concurrent policy efforts, the ASC aspires to:
 - i. address gaps and inconsistencies in current mandates and data sources
 - ii. build systems to baseline and track progress
 - iii. address the significance of reporting to parents
 - iv. disseminate quality information and showcase evidence-based strategies
 - v. provide accessible/user friendly content through digital innovations

3. Pursuit of a national policy response and associated governance arrangements to enable 'Learning through Movement' (ASC Draft policy)
 - a. The indicative targets of this policy proposal include:
 - vi. Aligning related investment
 - vii. Achieving partnerships and an integrated approach across States/ Territories/ relevant sectors
 - viii. Sharing and scaling best practice approaches and delivery efficiencies
 - ix. Ensuring Australians leave school with the skills, knowledge and behaviours to engage in movement and physical activity.

Main submission

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools. The submission from the ASC centres upon the principle that all young Australians have the right to an education that develops their full potential. Educational success ought to be defined by the extent to which it develops the whole person; their physical, psychological, cognitive and social capabilities. Through this process, the ASC hopes that appropriate attention will be given to:

1. Unpacking how all Australians, particularly young Australians, are supported to develop through an integrated and holistic approach to education;
2. Addressing the absence of reliable and coordinated approaches to data capture and reporting, which enable effective evidence based decision making; and
3. Pursuit of a national policy response and associated governance arrangements to enable 'Learning through Movement' (ASC Draft policy).

What should educational success for Australian students and schools look like?

The ASC supports the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008) in promoting equity and excellence in schooling and providing high quality learning opportunities that support all young Australians to become:

- Successful Learners
- Confident and creative individuals
- Active and informed citizens

Educational success means delivering on outcomes that develop the whole person. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), reference this 'whole of child' approach, with a particular emphasis that quality health and physical education is a key aspect of any rounded approach (UNESCO,

2015); and physical literacy is the outcome of quality health and physical education (UNESCO, 2015). To develop the whole individual means attention to their cognitive, social, emotional and physical capacities in equal measure.

‘Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians’ (Melbourne Declaration, 2008). As the Melbourne Declaration emphasises, this role is a shared responsibility for students, parents, carers, families, the community, business and other education and training providers.

The ASC recognises our role in this collective responsibility. Our position is that educational success for Australian students and schools should include a focus on physical literacy outcomes. Physical literacy is an approach that advocates for whole-of-child development and considers the interrelatedness of the physical, psychological, cognitive and social learning capacities. With this focus, and in partnership across the education, health and sport sectors, we can support better education outcomes, improved health and wellbeing, and the next generation of Australians realising the broader benefits of a physically active lifestyle.

Despite a range of key education documents reflecting a holistic focus for child development and identifying physical development as a key component of a child’s education, the ASC would argue that in practice, physical capability is marginalised resulting in a limited focus on student outcomes as well as a lack of monitoring and measurement.

The ASC believes there is poor appreciation within society of the importance of physical development and its contribution to whole-of-child development. We have seen the continued marginalisation of sport, physical education (PE) and physical activity in schools. Presently:

- Many Australian schools do not meet education system mandated/ recommended time for PE, Sport and/or physical activity (only 64% of primary schools and 51% of secondary schools adhere) (AHKA, 2016);
- There is increasing use of non-specialist Health and Physical Education (HPE) teachers who lack the skills, confidence and knowledge to provide quality HPE teaching and learning;
- There is inconsistency among educators when it comes to understanding, interpreting and implementing ‘quality’ sport and HPE; and
- There is no nationally accepted mechanism for determining whether children have the levels of physical literacy that will support a lifelong involvement in physical activity or sport.

What can we do to improve and how can we support ongoing improvement over time?

The ASC advocates for a whole school approach to physical literacy to support holistic development, by focusing on explicitly teaching the skills that support movement for life. It is important to note that the development of physical literacy is not the sole domain of our schools. To create meaningful behaviour change, a coordinated approach across sectors - including education, health and sport - is needed to support Australian children to develop the skills required to be more active.

A Physical Literacy Approach

Physical literacy is the integration of physical, psychological, cognitive and social capabilities that help us live active, healthy and fulfilling lives (for further information see: http://www.ausport.gov.au/participating/physical_literacy) (ASC, 2017)

Deliberately teaching, developing and measuring physical literacy has the potential to counteract the decline in physical activity across the nation, and support a generational change towards more active and healthy lifestyles. The ASC has produced an Australian definition of physical literacy (ASC, 2017) and a Physical Literacy Standard (the Standard) (ASC, 2017) to provide a framework for all Australians to develop physical literacy. The Standard promotes a shared vision, clarity of understanding and a common language around effective and high-impact development of physical literacy. It draws on practice, both locally and internationally, and is informed by research into what supports lifelong engagement in movement and physical activity.

Genuine engagement of parents and carers is critical to achieving a holistic approach to supporting children's health, wellbeing and development, as well as student outcomes. The Standard provides a framework to connect student outcomes with broader non-school outcomes, connecting parents and the community to support holistic child development and acknowledging, valuing and aligning with the learning that takes place outside school.

A focus on Physical Literacy outcomes will equip students with the tools required to be physically active for life, ensuring students:

- Continue to develop the capacity to learn through movement activities and contexts, across multiple school and non-school settings;
- Develop the requisite skills and behaviours to embrace a physically active lifestyle, providing ongoing benefits to the individual, to society and to the economy;
- Have the confidence and motivation to pursue new physical activities and movement experiences; and
- Experience a connection to community through physical activity, delivering improved psychological and social benefits through strengthened personal networks.

Development of the Physical Literacy Standard has been informed by relevant Australian Curriculum outcomes from HPE and the General Capabilities. Through this, the Standard compliments existing frameworks to support physical literacy development through early childhood, school and into adult life. The Standard can assist educators to assess the capabilities of students and to identify areas for development.

A National Approach to Learning through Movement

The ASC is committed to improving quality, consistent and inclusive access to learning through movement that aligns the Education and Sport sectors with a common purpose to help ensure more young people are equipped for active lifestyles. To better understand the current landscape the ASC has undertaken extensive consultation with a vast array of stakeholders across multiple sectors, including education, sport and recreation, health and transport. An emerging body of evidence suggests national strategies underpinned by collaborative, multi-sector and multi-component approaches are required to address the issue.

Improving funding, institutional and governance arrangements will change the existing value placed on physical activity and physical education, and support educators to deliver high quality physical literacy outcomes for students. The ASC commissioned Dr Glenn Savage (Senior Lecturer in Public Policy and Sociology of Education, The University of Western Australia) to undertake a review of the Australian education and policy landscape. Among Dr Savage's recommendations are:

1. An 'entitlement approach' to physical activity and quality learning through movement.

Frame quality and inclusive physical activity experiences as something all young Australians have a right to access, regardless of their background or circumstance.

Advancing an entitlement approach would align directly with a number of initiatives, including:

- UNESCO's 'International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport', which positions physical education as a fundamental right for all (UNESCO, 1978);
- The Australian Curriculum, which states that all young people have an 'entitlement to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning experiences across all areas of the curriculum' (ACARA);
- The Kazan Action Plan arising from the Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VI, 2017) which emphasised the importance of fostering quality physical education and active schools; and

- The UK Youth Sports Trust, which promotes physical literacy as ‘a right’ that all young people should have access to (YST).

In the area of schooling, an entitlement approach could involve: national mandates for physical activity; ensuring all young people have access to appropriate facilities, equipment, and extra-curricular opportunities; access to quality training and ongoing professional development for teachers to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to provide quality learning experiences; and ensuring all schools have comprehensive physical activity policies in place.

2. A national website to disseminate quality information, showcase evidence-based strategies, and promote the sharing of best practices

Develop a central ‘National Strategy’ website to provide information about the strategy and its importance, including user-centric resources for a range of stakeholders to embed physical activity into young people’s lives.

- In supporting educators and taking steps toward this recommendation, the ASC is collaborating with Education Services Australia (ESA) to curate physical literacy resources for the ‘Student Wellbeing Hub’, aligned to the National Safe Schools Framework.

3. Collaborative and multi-sector approaches

Collaborative and multi-sector approaches are proven most effective, particularly when partnerships are developed across organisations and levels (Brownson et al. 2006; GAPA 2010 and 2011). Schools therefore can be considered ‘community hubs’ with a broader network of relevant stakeholders where policy interventions can be concentrated to pursue broader agendas.

4. Strategically use authoritative and competitive policy strategies

Explore federal funding conditional upon implementation of identified strategies or targets. Establishing appropriate targets and identifying strategies and tools for measuring and monitoring physical capability at a national level will provide great insight into the current capabilities of our children and identify where we may need to act before it is too late, providing further support for an educational focus.

- The Victorian Government’s recently established ‘Education State Targets’ include a physical activity target, however, recent consultation indicates they have yet to determine appropriate measures.
- The ASC’s Physical Literacy Standard provides an avenue to support effective measuring and monitoring of physical literacy and physical activity outcomes.

Proposed ASC policy response

Since 2015, the ASC has been in collaboration with health, sport and education partners across all levels of government seeking to address issues of movement across the country. As a result, a national policy response has been proposed, seeking to tackle physical inactivity in children and young people.

The ASC currently has a draft policy document for consideration amongst partners across Australia – ‘Learning Through Movement’. It is intended that this policy response will be supported through education, health and sport Ministers in 2018.

A national approach to learning through movement would be based on evidence informed strategies to tackle physical inactivity and promote the importance of physical development in holistic child development. It would seek to commit governments to:

- improving access to quality, consistent and inclusive HPE provision in schools;
- improving access to quality and inclusive sport and recreation experiences;
- widening opportunities for young people to engage in active transport and play;
- policy design and implementation processes based on principles of democratic and collaborative governance, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities to ensure accountability;
- maintaining flexibility to allow for local tailoring, adaptation and innovation, within a framework of common national goals; and
- clear and consistent tools for monitoring and evaluation at the national level.

The approach would be underpinned by two goals:

1. All young Australians receive consistent, equitable and inclusive access to learning through movement in schools.

Every Australian child regardless of ability, impairment, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, political, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, has the right to access high-quality physical education and school sport as a core component of their formal education.

This requires those responsible to:

- ensure quality and developmentally appropriate learning experiences are provided to all students regardless of age, ability and background;
- ensure all young people have access to appropriate facilities, equipment and extra-curricular opportunities;
- ensure all students receive the required or mandated amount of HPE, physical activity and/or sport as directed by jurisdictions;
- ensure barriers to access to quality HPE, movement and physical activity in schools are reduced and or eliminated (e.g. cost, equal opportunities for both genders, inclusive games);

- promote the social inclusion of marginalised populations in movement and physical activity;
 - promote and empower students with disabilities to participate in movement and physical activity;
 - promote holistic approaches to movement and physical activity beyond traditional sports; and
 - ensure those delivering HPE, movement and physical activity to young people from diverse backgrounds in schools receive suitable professional development to support appropriate teaching and learning.
2. All young Australians receive consistent, high-quality teaching and learning through movement experiences in schools.

Enhancing high-quality and impactful teaching and learning rightly continues to be an Australian Government priority as a means to improving all student outcomes. This priority also needs to be a core focus of any work to improve learning through movement outcomes for young people in schooling.

This requires those responsible to:

- promote in schools a culture and community that supports and values learning through movement and its contribution to whole-of-child development;
- ensure learning outcomes improve in the HPE curriculum – in particular learning outcomes related to fundamental motor skills in the primary years;
- ensure the HPE curriculum is adequately embedded and resourced in all schools;
- strengthen connections between all movement experiences within schools;
- establish consistent expectations for quality delivery across a range of movement experiences
- ensure there are appropriate reporting measures in place to measure how well the HPE curriculum outcomes are being achieved across the nation;
- devise frameworks to accurately measure the impact of effective movement instruction outside of HPE lesson time;
- enhance initial teacher training for all pre-service educators related to learning through movement;
- enhance workforce planning and management to ensure all young people have access to qualified and enthusiastic teachers;
- ensure those delivering HPE, movement and physical activity receive ongoing professional development to ensure learning experiences are based on the best available evidence;
- promote physical literacy as an outcome of quality HPE that focuses on teaching students the physical, psychological, social and cognitive skills

- required to engage in movement and physical activity - not just the physical;
- and
- promote whole-school approaches to HPE, movement and physical activity, underpinned by comprehensive school-level policies

Data to support evidence informed interventions, monitoring and reporting

In collaboration with Federal, State and Territory Departments of education the ASC has been investigating how standards and targets can be created and better utilised to drive educational achievement and success.

Developing nationally consistent data requires clear underpinning aims and objectives, as well as commitment and collaboration across jurisdictions to capture and share data. It also involves generating new tools and methodologies in cases where existing data collection mechanisms are not in place or data cannot be accurately compared across systems.

The ASC is undertaking work to establish a measurement framework – the National Physical Activity Scorecard (the Scorecard) - to support the measurement and comparison of individuals and communities against the Australian Department of Health’s Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines (the Guidelines) (Department of Health, 2017).

The Scorecard will enable the ASC to capture and understand community physical activity patterns and behaviours, barriers to participation and physical activity issues. Data collected will be used to increase the percentage of the population being physically active and to support advocacy and awareness raising efforts as well as the development and implementation of strategies to raise the perceived value of physical activity among Australians as a means to improved health and social outcomes.

The Scorecard will be complementary to developing an individual’s Physical Literacy. Physical literacy is focused on the quality of sport and physical activity engaged in by an individual, while the Scorecard will be used to measure the frequency of these engagements, and provide advice on how to maintain or improve this level. Any such measure will consider the range of audiences for which it should be appropriate and provide another opportunity to align school and non-school approaches to supporting children’s physical development.

Are there barriers to implementing these improvements?

Dealing with multifaceted policy problems in the Australian political landscape where responsibilities are split between federal, state and territory governments is challenging. The ASC’s work across states/territories and jurisdictions to establish partnership opportunities to collaborate is a critical step to help overcome this challenge.

It is often said that what we measure is a clear indication of what we value. The current lack of assessment and reporting of physical development within education systems signifies the low value placed on developing children's physical capabilities. A lack of overarching national mandates or monitoring mechanisms makes it impossible to gain a consistent national portrait of what is happening in schools in relation to HPE and children's physical development. There is no national standard for data collection or reporting in regards to movement and physical activity. This leads to inconsistent approaches and restricts the nation's ability to activate informed interventions to enable change. Freedom of Information laws in each state/territory further compound this, inhibiting ease of collection and sharing of information on individuals.

To influence parents, educators and the broader community regarding the value of physical literacy will require longer term behaviour change approaches. Through broad cross-sector engagement the ASC is identifying appropriate mechanisms across the diverse groups of people and environment which facilitate sport and physical activities with children to support improved practice, and enhanced physical literacy outcomes for children.

Additional issues compounding the take up of Physical Literacy include:

- Competing education priorities;
- Gaining time and space in a crowded curriculum;
- Scaling physical literacy approaches for use across the nation, in a wide range of settings and contexts; and

Training of teachers to implement physical literacy successfully.