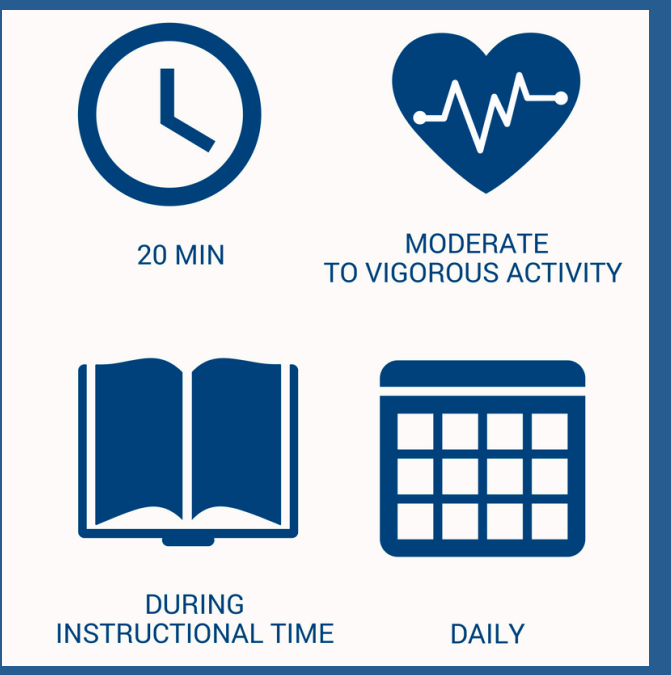




Parents' Perceptions of Ontario's Daily Physical Activity (DPA) Policy

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Purpose: To explore relationships between parents' perceptions of DPA and their beliefs about the role of schools vs. families in PA promotion.

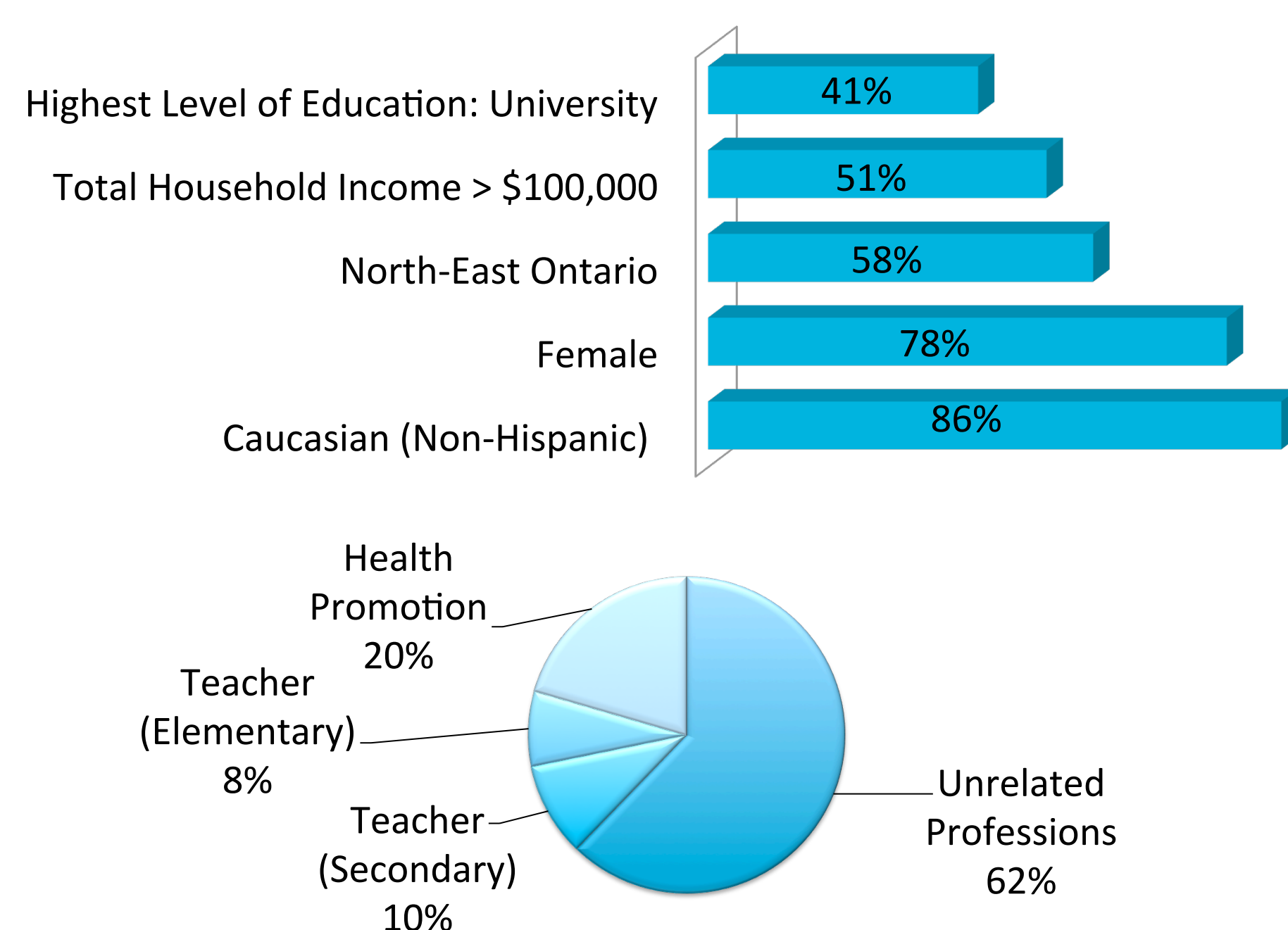
Introduction

- Ontario's DPA policy mandates that all elementary school children participate in 20 minutes of sustained MVPA during instructional time each school day (Ontario Ministry of Education [OMOE], 2005).
- Province-wide research suggests 42-50% of elementary teachers adhere to the DPA policy (McGoey, 2016; Public Health Ontario, 2015).
- Parents are key partners in school policies (OMOE, 2006, 2014) and play influential roles in their children's PA (Janssen, 2015).
- However, teachers identified a lack of parental engagement as a barrier to DPA implementation (McGoey, 2016).

Participants and Methods

Participants

- Self-identified parents/guardians ($n = 172$) of children attending elementary school in Ontario.
- Recruited using a snowball sampling technique.



Measure

- Items adapted from existing surveys⁵ and developed based on PA literature. Pilot-tested with an expert panel ($n = 4$) for content validity and clarity.
- Source of Children's PA (e.g., active play, sport, etc.) reported in a typical week (5 items).
- Perceptions of DPA and beliefs about PA promotion assessed according to the scales shown below.

Scale (n items)	α	Example Item
DPA Awareness (6)	.751	Prior to this survey I was familiar with the DPA policy.
DPA Suitability (4)	.729	DPA guidelines are realistic in terms of duration.
DPA Importance (4)	.733	...Important for schools to have a policy requiring DPA during the school day.
DPA Reporting (3)*	--	Report cards should include a section about DPA.
Attitudes (5)	.787	PA is associated with numerous health benefits.
Home Barriers (5)	.690	Time constraints limit my child's PA outside school.
Family Responsibility (5)	.614	...Important to attend school-based activities related to healthy active living.
School Responsibility (7)	.858	Schools should provide PA opportunities.
Support (9) ¹	.760	In a typical week within the last month, how often did you transport your child to PA events?

Likert scales ranged from 1(*strongly disagree*) to 5(*strongly agree*)

²Likert scale ranged from 1(*never*) to 6(*daily*)

*stand alone items

Procedure

- Anonymous online survey hosted by FluidSurveys.
- Responses screened for inclusion criteria and completion.
- Of the 172 consenting parents, 134 provided complete responses (5 statistical outliers). Final sample was 129.

Results

Descriptives for DPA Perceptions and Beliefs about PA

Variable	n	$M (SD) / Mdn (Range)$
DPA Awareness*	129	2.58 ($\pm .73$)
DPA Suitability	129	3.75 (1.25 – 5.00)
DPA Importance**	129	4.33 (2.00 – 5.00)
DPA Reporting**	127	4.00 (1.00 – 5.00)
Attitudes	129	4.60 (3.00 – 5.00)
Support ‡	129	3.56 (1.00 – 4.89)
Home barriers◇	129	2.80 ($\pm .74$)
Family responsibility***	129	4.40 (3.20 – 5.00)
School responsibility***	129	4.50 (3.17 – 5.00)

$M(SD)$ reported for normally distributed variables; $Mdn (Range)$ reported for non-normal variables.

Reliance on School vs. Family for Child's PA

Main PA Source	Frequency (Percentage)
Family > School	64 (50.4%)
School > Family	47 (37%)
Family = School	16 (12.6%)

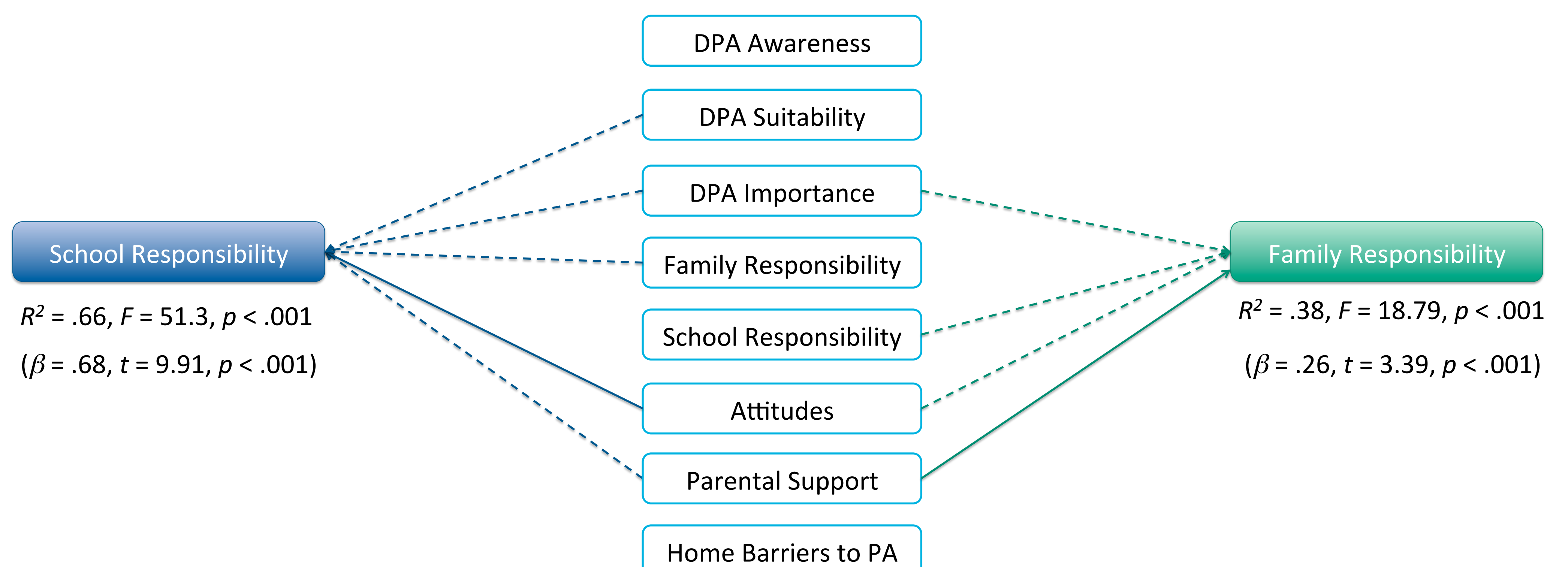
A 'Main PA Source' score was computed by adding responses specific to family-based PA (active play + organized sports + active commute) and subtracting from this value the cumulative score calculated for school-based PA (recess + HPE + DPA).

Positive value: Family > School

Negative value: School > Family

Null value: Family = School

Which beliefs predicts parents' perceptions of the school's vs. family's role in PA?



Multiple regressions: Solid lines represent significant predictors, while dashed lines represent non-significant contributors to the model.

Discussion

Parents' Awareness and Perceptions of the DPA Policy

- The majority of parents were not aware of the DPA policy. This may reflect a lack of communication between schools and parents.
- Despite being previously unaware of it, most parents did agree that DPA is an important and feasible initiative in elementary schools.
- Most parents agreed that DPA should be on report cards; however, those who self-identified as elementary school teachers were less likely to do so, which may be reflective of teachers' knowledge surrounding its actual implementation (McGoey, 2016).

Perceived Responsibilities of Home and Schools in Promoting Children's PA

- Approximately 50% of parents rely on schools for at least an equal contribution to their children's PA.
- Parents believe both institutions play important roles, with school having a greater perceived responsibility.
- However, the DPA policy was designed to contribute only 33% of the recommended amount of daily PA (Tremblay et al., 2016) and is not being implemented as directed (McGoey, 2016; Public Health Ontario, 2015).
- Findings add to evidence base advocating for parental support of children's PA promotion (De Lepeleere et al., 2013; Gustafson & Rhodes, 2006).

Implications

- Findings highlight the need to extend tenets of the policy into homes (OMOE, 2006) to increase parents' capacity to provide **support** for their children's PA.
- This may include improved communication with parents through:
 - Regular correspondence about DPA and healthy living education (e.g., using school websites and/or social media).
 - Inclusion of DPA information on report cards.
 - Engaging parents in DPA planning, promotion, and delivery (e.g., 'active homework').
- The involvement of parents in school-based programs is an important and modifiable underlying influence of children's PA (Ickes, Mahoney, Roberts, & Dolan, 2016). Further research is required to determine how to effectively foster this involvement.

⁵A list of all reference information and the survey are available from the first author: m0259261@community.nipissingu.ca