

Policy Extract

[Increasing and Improving Physical Education and Physical Activity in Schools: Benefits for Children's Health and Educational Outcomes](#)

Physical education in the nation's schools is an important part of a students' comprehensive, well-rounded education program and a means of positively affecting life-long health and well-being. At a minimum, the physical education programme should provide physical activity to enhance current health while teaching knowledge and skills that foster a long-term commitment to physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle that will help children prevent numerous conditions, including abnormal cholesterol, high blood pressure, hyperglycaemia, obesity, and ultimately heart disease as well as a host of other non-communicable diseases and mental health problems.

Specific Policy Recommendations

Standards-based Curriculum

- Require states to adopt physical education curriculum standards that are aligned with national standards and are systematically reviewed and updated.
- Require all school districts to develop and implement a planned, K-12 sequential physical education curriculum that adheres to national and state standards for physical education and includes a comprehensive student assessment programme.

Accountability

- States should require school districts and schools to complete comprehensive self-assessments of their physical education programme and physical activity offerings using the School Health Index at regular intervals consistent with state and district assessment.
- As part of this assessment, schools should report the following:
 - How many students are taking physical education
 - How many days per year students are taking physical education
 - How many total minutes of physical activity per week
 - How many class periods per week of physical education
 - Whether the school and/or district has adopted metrics for assessing their physical education programme
 - Whether there are requirements for fitness, cognitive, and affective assessment in physical education that are based on student improvement and knowledge gain
 - Implementation of the Presidential Fitness Program and using Fitnessgram
 - How many of the district's physical education teachers are licensed, certified and endorsed to teach physical education, show plans for ensuring all physical education teachers get these credentials, and show progress for meeting these teaching quality goals.
- States should require school districts and schools to report the findings of their self-assessment and fitness testing to the appropriate state agency in an aggregate

manner and to parents and members of the community through typical communication channels such as websites, school newsletters, school board reports, and presentations.

Licensed, Certified Teachers and Professional Development

- Require all physical education teachers to be certified, licensed and endorsed to teach physical education and provide grants to districts to assure their physical education teachers receive 6 adequate professional development specific to their field on an annual basis, especially districts serving at-risk students and minority populations.
- Integrate public health into professional development, educating members of the profession on their role within the public health model.
- Require teachers to keep current on emerging technologies, model programs, and improved teaching methods.

Physical Education as part of the Curriculum

- Require school districts and schools provide all students with 150 minutes per week of physical education in elementary schools and 225 minutes per week in middle schools and high schools. Achieve best practice of students being physically active for at least 50 percent of physical education class time.
- Provide adequate physical education and other physical activity opportunities to facilitate school-age children accumulating at least 60 minutes of physical activity before, during and after school and avoiding prolonged periods of inactivity.
- Require physical education credit(s) for graduation from high school with appropriate accommodations and considerations for children with disabilities and medical conditions.

Adequate Resources for Physical Education

- Hire a physical education coordinator at the state level to provide resources and offer support to school districts across the state.
- Hire a physical education administrator in the school district to provide support to physical educators in the school district.
- Assure that physical education programs have appropriate equipment and adequate facilities and appropriate student-teacher ratios since research shows that increasing access to human and material resources during class enhances the opportunity for students to engage in the recommended amount and intensity of physical activity.

Waivers/Substitutions

- Disallow automatic waivers or substitutions for physical education.
- Disallow the ability of states, school districts, schools, teachers, and coaches to assign or withhold physical activity as punishment.
- Do not allow waivers for students with disabilities, but rather allow modifications or adaptations that allow physical education courses to meet the needs of disabled students.

- Do not allow students to opt out of physical education to prepare for other classes or standardised tests.