



Promoting Health in Minnesota Schools:

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

As society becomes more aware of and concerned with children's health issues, communities are turning to schools to provide a school environment that promotes both healthy eating and physical activity.¹ School policies supporting healthy eating and physical activity are an important component of school efforts to promote the health and well-being of school children. Good nutrition and physical activity help "contribute to improved academic performance, attendance rates, behavior, and lifelong health and well-being."² School policies supporting physical education (PE) can encourage children to be more physically active by providing structured education about physical activity as part of the school curriculum.

What is physical education?

Physical education is a part of the school curriculum that gives students opportunities to enhance motor skills, develop fitness, and learn more about the importance of physical activity. School-based PE provides students with opportunities to increase physical activity and acquire the skills and knowledge needed to establish and sustain an active lifestyle.³ Physical education classes and curricula are critical to developing the whole student.⁴

Why is physical education important?

According to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), the goal of PE is to provide students with skills, knowledge and confidence needed to be physically educated and to "enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity."⁵ Quality PE programs help students meet national recommendations for daily physical activity and learn skills that contribute to lifelong healthy behavior.⁶ Benefits gained from physical activity include disease prevention, decreased morbidity and premature mortality, increased mental health and self-esteem, and better academic learning. Adding PE time to the school day can also help decrease children's risk for obesity.⁷

What is included in a good physical education program?

A good PE program provides students with quality programming that incorporates moderate to vigorous physical activity and is guided by competent, knowledgeable, and certified adults. A PE program should be standards-based and follow recognized and recommended guidelines (such as those prepared by NASPE).⁸

Do any federal or Minnesota laws require physical education?

Physical education is not mandated by federal law. In 2003, the Minnesota Legislature passed a law requiring school districts to adopt local standards for health and PE.⁹ In 2010, the Legislature passed the Minnesota Healthy Kids/Physical Education Act of 2010, which requires schools to adopt the NASPE National Standards for Physical Education beginning with the 2012-13 school year.¹⁰

Does the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA)¹¹ Model Wellness Policy¹² address physical education?

Yes. The MSBA Model Wellness Policy recognizes that physical activity and PE are essential components of the educational process and that the school environment and school district should encourage physical activity. See, for example, the General Statement of Policy (II) sections A, B, and C, as well as Guidelines (III) section D of the MSBA Model Wellness Policy.

Do any other MSBA policies impact physical education programs?

Yes. The MSBA has a number of model policies that may be relevant to PE, including:

- 503 (Student Attendance)
- 504 (Student Dress & Appearance)
- 505 (Distribution of Nonschool-Sponsored Materials on School Premises by Students & Employees)
- 512 (School-Sponsored Student Publications & Activities)
- 601 (School District Curriculum and Instruction Goals)
- 603 (Curriculum Development)
- 613 (Graduation Requirements)
- 902 (Use of School District Facilities and Equipment)
- 904 (Distribution of Materials on School District Property by Nonschool Persons)

What are some additional ways to incorporate physical education into a school wellness policy?

Below is language that can be incorporated into a school board policy modeled after the MSBA's model policy to strengthen the PE language. This language can also be individually tailored to fit into a school board policy that does not follow the MSBA's model policy.¹³

Addition to the MSBA School Wellness Policy

III. GUIDELINES

F. Physical Education

1. Goal:

- a. Every student will be physically educated; that is, will develop the knowledge and skills necessary to perform a variety of physical activities, maintain physical fitness, regularly participate in physical activity, understand the short- and long-term benefits of physical activity, and value and enjoy physical activity as an ongoing part of a healthy lifestyle.

2. Enrollment:

- a. Every student in each grade, prekindergarten through grade 12, will participate in physical education for the entire school year, including students with disabling conditions and those in alternative education programs.
- b. Students in elementary schools will participate in physical education at least 150 minutes each school week (preferably 30 minutes each school day), and students in middle schools and high schools will participate at least 225 minutes per week (preferably 45 minutes each school day).
- c. Because students learn essential knowledge and skills in physical education, enrollment in physical education class may not be waived on the basis of participation in athletic programs, ROTC, band, chorus, or similar activities that provide physical activity but are not physical education.
- d. Students who are unable to participate in the regular physical education program due to a disability or chronic health condition will be provided with adapted activities or courses in accordance with an individualized education plan (IEP) or individualized health plan (IHP).

3. Curriculum and instruction:

- a. Schools will implement a sequential, developmentally appropriate physical education curriculum that helps students acquire the knowledge, motor skills, self-management skills, attitudes, and confidence needed to adopt and maintain physical activity throughout their lives.
- b. The physical education program will follow the state's physical education standards, which are the National Standards for Physical Education; devote at least 50 percent of class time to moderate-to-vigorous physical activity either indoors or outdoors, weather permitting; meet the needs of all students, especially those who are not athletically gifted; actively teach cooperation and fair play; promote participation in physical activity outside of school; and focus on helping students at the high school and middle school levels develop an active lifestyle that will be carried on throughout their lives.
- c. Student/teacher ratios in physical education classes will be comparable to those in other curricular areas.
- d. Teachers will aim to develop students' self-confidence and maintain a safe psychological environment free of embarrassment, humiliation, shaming, taunting, or harassment of any kind.

4. Prepared teachers:

- a. All physical education classes will be taught by highly qualified physical education teachers who have completed accredited physical education teacher education programs and are certified to teach physical education.¹⁴

What other policy options can be used to support Physical Education?

In Minnesota, the superintendent is responsible for implementing and enforcing school board policy. Superintendents issue protocols, procedures, and guidelines to help implement the school board's policies. The following language can be incorporated into existing guidelines. However, as school boards and superintendents may adopt more specific or general guidelines based on their needs and goals, policy language can be interchangeable with the guidelines listed below.

Physical Education Guidelines

- Every student will have the opportunity to participate in physical education to learn the skills to help them engage in physical activity throughout their lives.
- At least half of a students' recommended daily physical activity will be provided through physical education.
- A sequential program of physical education for all students will be provided on a daily basis in grades PK–12 (150 min/week for elementary and 225 min/week for secondary) that:
 - Provides at least 50 percent of time devoted to moderate-to-vigorous physical activity;
 - Teaches knowledge, motor skills, goal-setting, self-management skills, and positive attitudes;
 - Promotes activities and sports that students enjoy and can pursue throughout their lives; and
 - Is taught by qualified, well-prepared, and well-supported staff.
- Physical education lessons will be adapted for students with disabilities or chronic health conditions.
- The program of health education will reinforce the knowledge and self-management skills needed to maintain a physically active lifestyle, maintain a healthy weight, and reduce time spent being sedentary.

What other resources may be helpful when developing a physical education program?

- Public Health Law Center, *Minnesota Healthy Kids/Physical Education Law*, <http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/ship-fs-physicaleducationlaw-2010.pdf>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Strategies to Improve the Quality of Physical Education*, http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physicalactivity/pdf/quality_pe.pdf
- NASPE, *Minnesota State Profile*, <http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/publications/upload/minnesota-profile.pdf>
- Education Development Center, *Action Steps for Implementing Physical Education*, http://www2.edc.org/makinghealthacademic/concept/actions_physed.asp
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *Healthy Schools for Healthy Kids*, <http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/reports/2003/rwjf12790>

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Endnotes

¹ See, e.g., *Local Wellness Policy: A Guide for Development*, MINN. DEP'T OF EDUC. 5 (2005), available at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/cdrr/nutrition/docsandpdf/localwellnesspolicy.pdf>.

² *School Wellness Policies*, IDAHO DEP'T OF EDUC., <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/cnp/wellness/> (last visited May 6, 2013).

³ See Task Force on Community Preventive Services, *Recommendations to Increase Physical Activity in Communities*, 22 AM. J. OF PREV. MED. 67 (May 2002), available at <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/pa-ajpm-recs.pdf>.

⁴ See *Physical Education*, MARYLAND DEP'T OF EDUC.,

http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/instruction/physical_education.htm (last visited Mar. 13, 2013); see also

Physical Education Teacher Certification, UNIV. OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON,

<http://uncw.edu/career/physicaleducation.html#whatis> (last visited Mar. 13, 2013) (“Activities included in the program are designed to promote physical fitness, to develop motor skills, to instill knowledge and understanding of rules, concepts, and strategies, and to teach students to work as part of a team, or as individuals, in a wide variety of competitive activities.”).

⁵ *Standards and Position Statements*, NAT'L ASS'N FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUC.,

<http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/standards/nationalstandards/pestandards.cfm> (last visited Mar. 13, 2013).

⁶ See *Position Statement: Physical Education is Critical to a Complete Education*, NAT'L ASS'N FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUC. (2001), available at <http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/standards/upload/Physical-Education-is-Critical-to-a-Complete-Education-2001.pdf>.

⁷ Mary MacVean, *More Gym for Kids Means Less Chance of Obesity, Cornell Study Says*, LOS ANGELES TIMES (May 21, 2013, 4:07 PM), <http://www.latimes.com/news/science/sciencenow/la-sn-gym-obesity-20130521,0,6376658.story>.

⁸ *Minnesota State Profile on Physical Education*, NAT'L ASS'N FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUC. (2010),

<http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/publications/upload/Minnesota-profile.pdf>; see also Russell Pate et al., *AHA Scientific Statement, Promoting Physical Activity in Children and Youth: A Leadership Role for Schools*, AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION (Aug. 14, 2006), <http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/114/11/1214.full.pdf+html>.

⁹ MINN. CHAPT. 129-H.F.NO. 302 (2003) (codified in scattered sections of MINN. STAT. § 120B and MINN. RULES part 3501).

¹⁰ MINN. CHAPT. 396--S.F.NO. 2908 § 1 (2010) (codified at Minn. Stat. § 120B).

¹¹ LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA CITIES, HANDBOOK FOR MINNESOTA CITIES 17:14 (2012), available at

<http://www.lmc.org/media/document/1/chapter17.pdf> (“The Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) supports, promotes and enhances the work of public school boards. MSBA is a private nonprofit organization that provides technical assistance; cost-saving programs; and advocacy, training, research, and referral services for all of Minnesota’s public [school members]. Membership in MSBA is voluntary.”).

¹² *MSBA/MASA Model Policy 533: Wellness*, MINN. SCHOOL BOARD ASS'N & MINN. ASS'N OF SCHOOL ADMIN. (2010).

¹³ *Schools Most Likely to Offer More Time for Physical Education When States Require It*, BRIDGING THE GAP (Dec. 5, 2011), available at http://www.bridgingthegapresearch.org/_asset/89yqwf/Slater-APAM-release-12.05.11.pdf (“A new study released . . . by the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine finds that schools are significantly more likely to meet physical activity

recommendations when state and school district policies mandate 150 minutes of weekly physical education and suggest 20 minutes of daily recess.”)

¹⁴ *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: Chapter D: Policies to Promote Physical Activity and Physical Education*, NAT’L ASS’N OF STATE BOARDS OF EDUC. 39 (last updated 2012), available at http://www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/FHRTL-D_Physical-Activity-NASBE-November-2012.pdf.