Office of the State Superintendent of Education

LOCAL WELLNESS POLICY

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Regular physical activity can help students improve cardiorespiratory fitness, build strong bones and muscles, control weight, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and reduce the risk of developing health conditions. Students who engage in physical activity show improved grades, school attendance, cognitive performance and classroom behavior. Physical activity includes engaging opportunities and activities that are empowering, regardless of ability, developmental status, or culture.

Physical education includes curricula and instruction for students in alignment with the District of Columbia's Physical Education Standards and provides students with the skills, knowledge and behaviors needed to establish and sustain a healthy and active lifestyle. High-quality physical education consists of inclusive learning experiences and activities that contributes to motor skill development, boosts self-esteem, reduces stress and anxiety, develops social skills and improves breathing and blood circulation, resulting in better concentration, improved behavior and stronger academic success.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SETTING YOUR GOALS

- Assess student physical education needs at your local education agency (LEA) by evaluating current curriculum, policies and practices. Ensure physical education is aligned to the DC Physical Education Standards.
- Include immersive learning experiences and activities that reinforce physical activity messages relevant for your school's unique student community needs. Integrate physical activity into the school day outside of physical education and recess, such as stretch and movement breaks, morning exercises, outdoor learning, nature walks or by offering unique activities like yoga, dance or martial arts. Movement can also be incorporated into traditional classroom lessons for subjects such as math, science, language arts and broader social and emotional learning standards and concepts.
- Include opportunities for teacher supports and professional learning that align with emerging student and community needs and national best practices. Consider how to also encourage healthy movement and activity opportunities among school staff.
- Consider how physical activity can be promoted before and after school, such as through active transport (walking or biking to school), intramural and interscholastic athletics, cheerleading, hiking, running or fitness clubs.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS

- Identify specific goals for increasing physical activity and other school-based activities that promote wellness through physical activity (7 CFR 210.31(c)(1) and DC Code § 38–826.01(b)(C)).

RECOMMENDED ELEMENTS

- Provide physical education aligned with DC Physical Education Standards to students in kindergarten through grade 8 (DC Code § 38–821.01(6C) and DC Code § 38–824.02(a)).
- Aim for an average of 150 minutes of physical education per week and at least one 20-minute recess daily for students in kindergarten through Grade 5. Schools falling short of 90 minutes per week must submit an action plan to OSSE to increase physical education before the next school year (DC Code § 38–824.02(a)(1)(A) and DC Code § 38–824.02(a)(2)(A)).
- Aim for an average of 225 minutes of physical education per week and at least one 20-minute recess daily for students in grades 6-8. Schools falling short of 135 minutes per week must submit an action plan to OSSE to increase physical education before the next school year (DC Code § 38–824.02(a)(1)(A) and DC Code § 38–824.02(a)(2)(A)).
- Ensure at least 50 percent of physical education time is dedicated to moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (DC Code § 38–821.01(6C)).
- Provide adapted physical education or supplementary aids for students with special needs to ensure their participation in physical education (DC Code § 38-824.03(a)).
- Prohibit requiring or withholding physical activity as a means to punish students (DC Code § 38-824.03(b)).
- Provide students in grades pre-K 3 and pre-K 4 with an average of 60 minutes of daily physical activity (DC Code § 38–824.02(a-1)(1)).

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Health and physical education teachers
- School administrators
- Extracurricular educators (Art, Athletics, Dance, etc.)
- Before and after school staff
- Students
- Parents
- Community-based organizations

RESOURCES

- DC Health Education and Physical Education Standards

Provide a clear, skills-based and age-appropriate approach to essential health and physical education topics that impact District students.

- OSSE School Health Profiles Data

Self-reported school-based health questionnaire completed annually by all public schools and public charter schools, as required by the Healthy Schools Act (HSA).

- DC Social and Emotional Learning Standards

Social and emotional standards developed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) for all public and charter school students across the District.

- SHAPE America Society for Health and Physical Educators

The Society of Health and Physical Educators, or SHAPE America, publishes national health education and physical education standards, providing a comprehensive framework for educators to deliver high-quality instruction and make a positive difference in the health and well-being of every preK-12 student.

- SHAPE America Physical Education Standards

New national physical education standards, released in March 2024, define what a student should know and be able to do as result of a highly effective physical education program.

- CDC Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (PECAT)

The Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool, also known as the “PECAT”, is a self-analysis tool designed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for schools to assess physical education curricula.

- National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities

Website for the National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities (NCPEID), a national organization that plays a pivotal role in influencing the direction and development of the adapted physical education/ activity field.