

Importance of School Physical Education

Participation in regular physical activity promotes normal growth and development by helping youth build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints.¹ Physical activity helps reduce the risk of developing obesity and chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and also promotes psychological well-being.¹

National physical activity recommendations for youth

It is recommended that school-age youth (ages 6-18) participate daily in 60 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity that is developmentally appropriate, enjoyable, and involves a variety of activities.² This is consistent with the recommendations of the U.S. Surgeon General, American Heart Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans which advise that children and adolescents should engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.^{1,3} In addition, extended periods (two hours or more) of inactivity are discouraged for children, especially during the daytime hours.⁴

How are Minnesota youth doing?

Data from the Minnesota Student Survey indicate a high percentage of Minnesota youth, especially girls, fail to meet national physical activity recommendations.⁵

Percentage of students reporting being physically active 5 or more days per week for at least 30 minutes per day (moderate physical activity):

	<u>Grade 6</u>	<u>Grade 9</u>	<u>Grade 12</u>
Boys	52%	62%	52%
Girls	43%	49%	31%

Percentage of students participating in a physical activity that made them sweat or breathe hard 3 or more days per week for at least 20 minutes per day (vigorous physical activity):

	<u>Grade 6</u>	<u>Grade 9</u>	<u>Grade 12</u>
Boys	71%	75%	66%
Girls	69%	70%	51%

National physical education recommendations for youth

Physical education is a school-based program that provides students with opportunities to be physically active and to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to establish and sustain an active lifestyle.⁶

The national recommendation for school physical education is 150 minutes per week in elementary schools and for 225 minutes per week in middle and high schools.⁷

Quality, daily physical education taught by qualified, trained educators provides the unique opportunity for students to obtain the knowledge and skills needed to establish and maintain physically active lifestyles throughout childhood, adolescence, and into adulthood.^{6,7}

Quality, daily physical education is recommended by more than 30 national organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Heart Association, Action for Healthy Kids, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Association for State Boards of Education, and National Association for Sport and Physical Education.^{2,6,7}



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Status of physical education in Minnesota

Findings from the Health and Physical Education in Minnesota School, 2002 report suggest that many youth are not attaining recommended levels of physical activity and are not being offered recommended levels of physical education or opportunities for physical activity.⁸ According to the survey, more than 90% of schools did not meet the national recommendation for number of minutes per week for physical education classes.

The extent of instructional time, standards, and assessments for physical education are determined at the local school district level. School districts, however, are not required to offer physical education at every grade level. Physical education has not been a state graduation requirement in Minnesota since 2003. However, currently about 95% of high schools have physical education as a graduation requirement.

Current Minnesota law requires that instruction in physical education be provided to all students in grades K-8 every year and at least once in high school. Individual school districts must establish local standards for instruction in physical education that are delivered by physical education teachers who are certified, licensed, or endorsed by the State of Minnesota. Local districts also determine if physical education is required for graduation.

Summary

School-based physical education is strongly recommended because of its effectiveness in increasing physical activity and improving physical fitness among adolescents and children.⁹

References

¹CDC. (1996). Physical activity and health: A report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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³U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2005). Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005. Online resource: www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines.

⁴National Association for Sport and Physical Education. (1995). *Moving into the future: National physical education standards: A guide to content and assessment*. Reston, VA: National Association for Sport and Physical Education.

⁵Minnesota Departments of Education, Health, Human Services and Public Safety. 2007 Minnesota Student Survey. Online resource: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/mss

⁶Pate, R., Davis, M., Robinson, T., Stone, E., McKenzie, T., & Young, J. (2006). AHA Scientific Statement, Promoting Physical Activity in Children and Youth: A Leadership Role for Schools. *Circulation*, 114(11): 1214-1224.

⁷Lee, S., Burgeson, C., Fulton, J., & Spain, C. (2007). Physical education and physical activity: Results from the School Health Policies and Programs Study 2006. *Journal of School Health*, 77: 435-463.

⁸Minnesota Department of Education & Minnesota Department of Health. (2004). *Health and Physical Education in Minnesota Schools, 2002*. Mounds View, MN: Minnesota Institute of Public Health.

⁹National Association for Sport and Physical Education & American Heart Association. (2006). *2006 Shape of the nation report: Status of physical education in the USA*. Reston, VA: National Association for Sport and Physical Education.