## **Physical Education and Physical Activity**

Students perform better academically when schools recognize the importance of Physical Education and Physical Activity (PA). This analysis explores the extent and content of physical education standards, as well as opportunities for physical activity throughout the day. A comprehensive school physical activity program includes physical education, physical activity during school, physical activity before and after school, staff involvement, and family and community engagement.<sup>1</sup>

## How is physical education and physical activity addressed in state law?

- Twenty-nine states address or otherwise refer to the National Physical Education Standards<sup>2</sup> within state PE curriculum laws. These standards, developed by SHAPE America, provide a baseline for all schools and districts to ensure students are receiving adequate physical education.
- Laws that address providing adapted PE to students with disabilities were found in 43 states. Some states address this as part of their guarantee of a Free Appropriate Public Education; in others, adapted PE is included specifically within PE provisions.

Figure 1. Only two states (MS and SC) cover more than 75 percent of physical education and physical activity topics examined.

Comprehensiveness of policies promoting physical education and activity in schools, by state

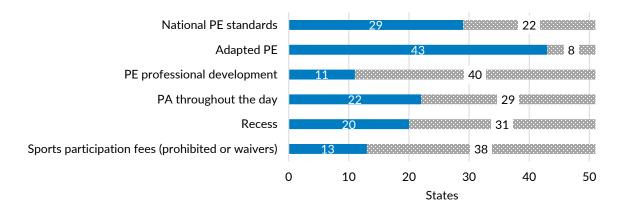


This map shows states that have  $[\diamond]$  **comprehensive** (2),  $[\varDelta]$  **moderate** (33), and  $[\Box]$  **low** (16) coverage of physical education and physical activity topics in statutes and regulations governing education.

- Many states have laws that allow exemptions for academics (8 states) or disability (18 states), allow substitutions for other activities (22 states), or provide for state waivers from PE requirements for school districts (9 states). Exemptions from PE, while sometimes medically necessary, may not always be in the best interests of keeping students physically active.
- Eleven states' laws explicitly address providing professional development for PE teachers. Such training opportunities are critical to ensure teachers are sharing the most up-to-date knowledge on physical education.
- Fewer than half of states address providing physical activity throughout the day (e.g., classroom breaks) (22 states) or through recess (20 states). Opportunities for physical activity not only help increase the amount of activity students engage in, they can also help improve on-task focus and behavior.<sup>3</sup>
- Twelve states' laws allow for sports participation fees to be collected but specifically provide for waivers in certain situations. Fees to participate in school sports may limit opportunities for some students.<sup>4</sup> California's law prohibits such fees.

## How comprehensively do states cover physical education and physical activity?

- Consistent with prior studies,<sup>5</sup> all states addressed physical education and physical activity, but this report highlights many new opportunities for policy expansion. Physical education is addressed in laws in every state except Hawaii, but time for PE, limits on PE exemptions, recess, and sports participation fees are addressed less often.
- Mississippi and South Carolina are the most comprehensive (addressing 75 percent of topic areas each). The two states include both physical education and physical activity topics.



## Figure 2. Number of States Covering Selected Physical Education and Physical Activity Topics

Child Trends, in partnership with The Institute of Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago and EMT Associates, Inc., examined the extent to which 11 healthy schools domains are addressed in state policy. These domains include the 10 components of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model: Health Education; Physical Education and Physical Activity; Nutrition Environment and Services; Health Services; Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services; Social and Emotional Climate; Physical Environment; Employee Wellness; Family Engagement; and Community Involvement. An additional domain, the WSCC References domain, addresses the extent to which state laws include explicit references to the WSCC model or similar language, such as the Center for Disease Control and Preventions' Coordinated School Health model.

This sub-brief provides an overview of how state policies cover the Physical Education and Physical Activity domain. Sub-briefs covering the other domains as well as the compiled report can be found on the <u>Child Trends</u> <u>website</u>. Definitions of each of the 12 topics are provided in the Appendix of the compiled report. Data from all topics are available through the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) <u>State Policy</u> <u>Database on School Health</u>.

Addressed Not addressed

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: A Guide for Schools, (2013). Retrieved https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/pdf/13\_242620-A\_CSPAP\_SchoolPhysActivityPrograms\_ Final\_508\_12192013.pdf. Accessed April 1, 2017.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Shape America. National Standards & Grade-Level Outcomes for K-12 Physical Education. Reston, VA: 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Mahar, M. T., Murphy, S. K., Rowe, D. A., Golden, J., Shields, A. T., & Raedeke, T. D. (2006). Effects of a classroom-based program on physical activity and on-task behavior. *Medicine and science in sports and exercise*, 38(12), 2086.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Eyler, A., Piekarz-Porter, E., & Serrano, N. (2018). Pay to play? state laws related to high school sports participation fees. *J. Pub. Health Management and Practice*, doi: 10.1097/PHH.00000000000813.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Piekarz-Porter E, Chriqui JF, Schermbeck RM, Leider J, Lin W. The Active Role States Have Played in Helping to Transform the School Wellness Environment through Policy, School Years 2006-07 through 2014-15. Chicago, IL: Bridging the Gap Program and the National Wellness Policy Study, Institute for Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2017, www.go.uic.edu/NWPSproducts.