



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION TIME REQUIREMENTS

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You asked what the state requirements are for the duration of physical education classes or activity in public schools.

SUMMARY

There is no statutory or regulatory requirement for public schools to provide a set amount of time for physical education in any grade. New legislation enacted in 2012 requires each school district to include a total of 20 minutes of “physical exercise” in each regular school day for students in kindergarten through grade five (K-5). This requirement took effect July 1, 2012.

State Department of Education (SDE) physical education curriculum guidelines recommend that school districts offer physical education in all grades, including minimum recommended durations. But school districts are not required to follow state curricula and the SDE guidelines are voluntary.

Districts and schools must report on students’ physical fitness in their annual strategic school profiles. To implement this requirement, SDE requires districts to give fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth-graders an annual state physical fitness test designed to measure their flexibility, cardiovascular fitness, and strength, among other things.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The statutory requirements for physical education or activity are:

- To graduate from high school: For grades 9-12, each student must have a minimum of one credit in physical education over the four grades. One credit is defined as the equivalent of a 40-minute class period each school day for one school year (CGS § 10-221a (b), (c), and (f)).
- In grades K-5: Starting July 1, 2012, each school district must provide a total of 20 minutes of physical exercise during the regular school day (PA 12-116, § 9 and PA 12-198, § 5). Prior law required districts to offer K-5 students a daily period of physical activity but did not specify its duration (CGS § [10-221o](#)). The “physical exercise” does not have to occur in a physical education class; it can be one or more recess periods.

CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

Connecticut does not mandate curricula. Instead, the SDE issues curriculum guidelines that districts may voluntarily follow. The state’s most recent physical education guidelines, issued in 2000, recommend the following:

- Elementary school: A minimum of 60 to 100 minutes per week increasing to 80 to 120 minutes in intermediate grades
- Middle school: A minimum of three class periods per week comparable in length to other content periods
- High school: A recommendation that districts (1) adopt graduation requirements that exceed the statutory minimum for physical education (one credit over four years) and (2) provide physical education to all students in each of their high school years ([Physical Education-A Guide to K-12 Program Development](#), Sec. IV, pp. 59-60.)

REQUIRED PHYSICAL FITNESS ASSESSMENT

By law, schools and school districts must report on their students' physical fitness as part of the annual strategic school profiles (CGS § [10-220c](#)). Each school district and school profile must address characteristics, needs and resources, including whether a gym is available, time allotted for physical education instruction, and participation in athletics and extracurricular activities.

To implement the law, SDE requires districts to administer a state test, the *Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment*, to all students in grades four, six, eight, and 10 who are participating in physical education during the testing period, which is the last week in September through the second week in November. The test measures muscle strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and cardiovascular fitness. A full description of the [test requirements](#) is available on SDE's website.

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