

Requirements for Physical Education in Public Schools

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Issue

Explain whether there are federal or state requirements to include physical education in public school curriculum.

Federal Law and Guidelines

Federal law does not require public schools to provide physical education, although most states or local school districts, to varying degrees, offer or require such classes. In 2008, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued [guidelines for recommended physical activity](#), which are intended to promote healthy lifestyles through physical activity for all ages. While the guidelines recommend that children and adolescents should do 60 minutes or more of physical activity a day, they are not a government requirement. Also, they do not address physical education.

Furthermore, the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) issued [national guidelines](#) that recommend schools provide 150 minutes per week of instructional physical education for elementary school children and 225 minutes per week for middle and high school students. The report containing the guidelines also provides links to physical education standards or requirements in each state.

Connecticut Law

Connecticut law requires that physical education be part of the public school curriculum for all grades ([CGS § 10-16b\(a\)](#)). For elementary school, the law does not specify a required amount of time for physical education, but the law addressing lunch breaks and recess requires at least 20 minutes of time devoted to physical exercise each day ([CGS § 10-221o](#)).

For grades nine through 12, the high school graduation requirement law specifies that each student must have earned a minimum of one credit of physical education during high school in order to graduate ([PA 17-42](#)).

JM:cmg