

Physical Education in the 2020-21 School Year: Recommendations and Resources

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The goal of physical education is to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity. To fulfill a lifetime of physical activity, a physically literate individual:

- Has learned the skills necessary to participate in a variety of physical activities;
- Knows the implications and the benefits of involvement in various types of activities
- Participates in regular physical activity;
- Is physically fit;
- Values physical activity and its contribution to a healthful lifestyle.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic does not change the goal of physical education; however, there are considerations that apply in implementing programming. This document is an effort to identify those considerations that are apparent to date based on three potential reopening scenarios in the fall as identified by the Minnesota Department of Health:

- **Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students**
- **Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits**
- **Scenario 3: Distance learning only**

Because the COVID-19 situation is fluid, it's important to keep in mind that this is a living document and will be updated as we learn more about how to successfully serve our students through physical education programs. At the time of publishing, reopening guidance from [SHAPE America](#) had not yet be released. The document will be updated once that occurs.

Health Guidelines

For all scenarios, it is critical that school districts and charter schools follow Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) 2020-21 School Year Planning Guidance, found on the [Schools and Child Care page](#) of the MDH website.

Minnesota Physical Education Requirements

School-based early childhood programs should have instruction aligned to the Minnesota Early Learning Indicators in [Physical and Movement Development](#).

K-12 schools are required to implement the [Minnesota 2010 Physical Education Standards](#), and develop their own grade-level benchmarks, curriculum and assessments to meet them. All students must receive instruction in physical education K-8 every year. High school students must receive instruction in physical education at least once. The amount of credit and graduation requirement is determined at the local level.

It's important to note that K-12 physical education standards are changing. The [2018 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#) are to be fully implemented in all Minnesota school districts by the 2021-22 school year. Full implementation is defined as:

- By the 2021-22 school year, instruction in physical education in grades K-8 must include all the [2018 Minnesota Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#).
- Instruction at the high school level must include [the 2018 Minnesota Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#) for grades 9-12 beginning with the 2021-22 freshman (ninth grade) class.
- All school districts are required to develop assessments to ensure students are meeting the benchmarks.

Accessibility, Equity and Inclusion

Educational equity is the condition of justice, fairness and inclusion so that all students have access to opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potentials. No matter the delivery method, physical educators need to foster a culture of acceptance and belonging for all students. Differentiated instructional strategies will result in meaningful participation of all students in physical education, regardless of background, identity or ability, and is essential for optimal learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused stress, trauma, and disruption in routine for students that may have resulted in complex learning support needs. Awareness of these conditions will assist physical education teachers in program implementation in the fall. While planning, consider the following:

- Regardless of the environment, students may move, think, feel or act differently and may need time to relearn skills. Be patient with them. Students learn best when they feel competent and confident in fundamental movement skills.
- Adapt learning expectations to meet the students' current conditions. By modifying programming so students of all physical abilities can participate in movement meaningfully.
- Consider students with 504 or Individual Educational Plans (IEP's) and make accommodations or modifications to meet their needs.
- Integrate social-emotional learning skills and competencies through all physical education programming. For more information regarding social-emotional competencies, see the [Minnesota Department of Educations' Social-Emotional Implementation Guidance](#).
- As much as possible, one-on-one communications with students will provide a needed connection that fosters a sense of belonging. Encourage students to be active. Promote autonomy in activity selections.
- Get to know your student's pandemic experiences. Stress and trauma can inhibit learning. Meet students where they are and adapt accordingly. Appropriate movement selections can help relieve their stress.
- Be creative about how students can connect with each other emotionally and build skills like communication, cooperation, teamwork and responsibility while following distance learning guidelines.

Instructional Considerations

A quality physical education program provides students with a planned, sequential, K-12 standards-based program of curricula and instruction designed to develop motor skills, knowledge and behaviors for active living, physical fitness, sportsmanship, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. Whether students are in the gym, at home, on a playground or in a field, the goal in physical education is to develop physically literate students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to be active for a lifetime. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has created a new educational challenge for physical educators to determine the most effective instructional strategies that can reach all students.

Keep the “E” in Physical Education

Canada’s document [Putting the E in Online Physical Education: Thinking Beyond Push-Ups and Jumping Jacks](#) provides physical educators food for thought regarding Covid-19’s impact on physical education instruction in distance learning.

“In response to the quick need for resources, lessons, and activities in this emergency teaching environment, many organizations – educational, recreational, and fitness – have developed physical activities for students to do at home. Many of these programs are fitness-focused. While they are of value now, they should not be thought of as, or a replacement for, physical education classes...Physical education is not just movement. It is the pedagogical process of learning about movement, and learning in movement.”

As physical educators prepare for the fall of 2020, regardless of the learning model, keep the “education” in the forefront of planning. Physical education standards, while inclusive of physical fitness, also address:

- fundamental motor movement skills and apply them to complex movement patterns utilized in multiple activities,
- application of knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics to movement and performance,
- responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others, and
- recognition of the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction.

Instructional Strategies Relevant to all Scenarios

- Review the curriculum and ensure it is aligned with current [Minnesota 2010 Physical Education Standards](#) through this school year (2020-21) and the [Early Childhood Indicators of Progress](#); or the [2018 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#) are to be fully implemented in all Minnesota school districts by the 2021-22 school year.
- Analyze delivery methods to include flexible, student-centered options.
- Analyze learning outcomes to ensure they focus on four domains equally – physical, cognitive, affective and behavioral.
- Include more individual pursuits rather than traditional team activities such as dance and rhythms; outdoor pursuits such as orienteering or hiking; target games such as golf or bocce ball; or aquatics.
- Assess all state standards including both formative and summative assessment
- Determine how to best serve students with Individual Learning Plans.

Distance Learning (online or analog) Considerations

- Utilize flipped classrooms, inquiry-based learning, and social-emotional learning approaches to optimize learning and well-being.
- Provide opportunities for students to design, monitor, and evaluate their own physical activity preferences.
- Allow students to choose activities and describe how the selected activity impacts their flexibility, cardiovascular health, muscular strength and endurance.
- Include activities and assignments using technology when feasible.
- Balance screen time and activity time.
- Hold dedicated office hours so students can reach you, or schedule phone or other means of communication for student check-ins.
- Explore using parks or green spaces for outdoor learning and activities.
- Provide equipment if needed to meet an assignment.

Equipment and Facilities

Equipment When Distance Learning

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is advisable for physical education programs to focus on activities that do not use equipment as much as possible. If equipment use is desired, it is recommended to set aside a budget and assemble individualized physical education kits for each student. Physical educators can also be creative and identify common objects in the home, such as soup cans or empty water bottles, to utilize for identified activities.

In-School Game Equipment

Limit use of equipment to one student at a time and disinfect after each use. If equipment is being utilized as part of a small-sided practice task or game, the equipment should be cleaned and disinfected after use. For example, a group of four students is participating in a small-side practice task using a basketball, that basketball must be disinfected before use by the next group. Make hand-washing stations readily available for students after equipment use. The [CDC Consideration for Youth Sports](#) guidance document recommends that once a small group is formed, that the group stays together for each small-sided practice task or game to reduce the spread of infection. Dependent upon the age and responsibility level of the students, a physical educator may teach students the proper disinfecting procedures. If at all possible, it is recommended the physical educator have enough time between classes to ensure all equipment is properly disinfected.

For the most current information on team sports and sharing equipment go to [CDC Consideration for Youth Sports](#)

School Facility Equipment: Gymnasiums, Weight Rooms, Dance Studios

All surfaces that come into contact with students or staff should be cleaned and disinfected regularly. In gymnasiums, this would include all sports balls, paddles, rackets, and other gear; any seating such as bleachers, benches, and chairs; flooring; wrestling or gymnastics and dance mats; volleyball nets and upright padding;

basketball rims; keypads and touch screens for electronic equipment; storage carts such as carts, ball racks, and shelving; and all gymnastic equipment. In fitness areas, this includes treadmills and elliptical machines; weights and weight machines; and other exercise equipment. In locker rooms this includes locker handles, shower handles, bathroom stall handles, toilets, sinks, and soap and towel dispensers.

For more information on cleaning and disinfecting go to:

- [CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Community Facilities](#)
- [CDC Reopening Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes](#)

Activities

Distance learning has challenged physical educators to think beyond the gymnasium or outdoor field setting to determine activities that can be done in the home, usually alone, with minimal space and equipment. The [2018 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#) identify activity categories that physical educators are utilizing to assist them in their selections and are adapting for distance learning. They include:

- Aquatics
- Dance and rhythmic activities
- Fielding and Striking games
- Fitness Activities
- Individual performance activities
- Invasion games
- Net and wall games
- Outdoor pursuits
- Target games

Assessment

There are many assessment tools available for gathering data on student knowledge and performance. Selecting the appropriate tool depends on the tool's ability to provide evidence specific to the benchmarks and performance criteria. When selecting assessments, physical educators should remember the context of their teaching environment (i.e., available space, number of students, availability of equipment, learning environment (in school or distance learning)).

To provide physical educators assistance in assessment, the Minnesota Department of Education has created elementary, middle school, and high school sample assessment documents. These documents allow teachers to measure performance and knowledge across all standards identified in the [2018 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#). Teachers have the ability to select or modify assessments, or to build their own. The documents can be found here:

- [Elementary School \(grades K-5\) Physical Education Sample Assessments](#)
- [Middle School \(grades 6-8\) Physical Education Sample Assessments](#)

- [High School \(grades 9-12\) Physical Education Sample Assessments](#)

Resources and References

Minnesota Department of Health 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools

[2018 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#), Retrieved June 12, 2020 from the [Minnesota Department of Education Health and Physical Education Web Page](#).

[Minnesota Early Learning Indicators of Progress in Physical and Movement Development](#), Retrieved June 16, 2020 from the [Minnesota Department of Education Website](#).

[CDC Consideration for Youth Sports](#), Retrieved June 12, 2020 from the [CDC COVID-19 Youth Sports Web Page](#).

[CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Community Facilities](#), Retrieved June 12, 2020 from the [CDC Covid-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting Web Page](#).

[CDC Reopening Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes](#), Retrieved June 12, 2020 from the [CDC Covid-19 Reopening Guidance Web Page](#).

[Covid-19 Return to School Canadian Health and Physical Education Guidelines](#), PDF, Retrieved June 12, 2020 from the [PHE Canada Guidelines for Return to School Web Page](#).

[Distance Learning Resources](#), Retrieved June 12, 2020 from [the Minnesota Society of Health and Physical Educators Web Page](#).

[Guidance for Social Distancing in Youth Sports](#), PDF, Retrieved June 12, 2020 from the [Minnesota Department of Health Web Page](#).

[Minnesota's 10 Commitments to Equity](#), Retrieved June 12, 2020 from the [Minnesota Department of Education Every Student Succeeds Act Web Page](#).

[Minnesota 2010 Physical Education Standards](#), Retrieved June 12, 2020 from the [Minnesota Department of Education Health and Physical Education Web Page](#).

[Putting the E in Online Physical Education: Thinking Beyond Push-Ups and Jumping Jacks](#), Retrieved June 12, 2020 from the [PHE Canada Blog Web Page](#).

[SHAPE America Guidelines for Online Physical Education](#), Retrieved June 12, 2020 from the [SHAPE America Guidelines and Position Papers Web Page](#).

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