



Recommendation and Research on Physical Education

**Texas School Health Advisory
Committee**

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Introduction

In 2005, the 79th Legislature adopted [Texas Health and Safety Code, Section 1001.0711](#), establishing the Texas School Health Advisory Committee (TSHAC). The purpose of TSHAC is to provide a leadership role for the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) in the support for, and delivery of, coordinated school health programs and school health services. In 2007, the 80th Legislature added Texas Education Code (TEC), Section 38.104, expanding TSHAC’s responsibilities to assess the effectiveness and develop recommendations for coordinated health programs provided by schools based on the findings of the analysis of the results of the required fitness assessment. [25 Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\), Rule 37.350](#), lists the roles and responsibilities of TSHAC.

The Recommendation and Research on Physical Education document was developed by TSHAC in 2015 as a recommendation to the State Health Services Council. That council was abolished with the passage of [Senate Bill 200, 84th Legislature, Regular Session, 2015](#). The TSHAC decided to maintain the document to serve as a reference and illustrative guide for local school boards or charter school leadership. In 2023, the TSHAC established the Physical Education subcommittee to update the research and recommendations with administrative support provided by DSHS staff.

This document can be used as a resource to help create and implement school district policies and administrative regulations. This document should not serve as treatment guidelines for healthcare practitioners.

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Existing Physical Education Mandates

Physical Education Curriculum

In accordance with [TEC, Section 28.002\(d\)](#), a physical education curriculum must enable students to develop skills, knowledge, and self-efficacy to participate in physical activity throughout life. The [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills \(TEKS\) for Physical Education](#) are required standards for instruction; however, the systems of delivering these standards are flexible.

Elementary School

In accordance with [TEC, Section 28.002\(l\)](#), a school district must require students enrolled in kindergarten or a grade level below sixth grade to participate in moderate or vigorous physical activity for at least 30 minutes daily throughout the school year as part of the district's physical education curriculum or through structured activity during a school year as part of a school campus's daily recess. To the extent practicable, a school district must require a student enrolled in prekindergarten on less than a full-day basis to participate in the same type and amount of physical activity as a student enrolled in full-day prekindergarten.

If a school district determines for any particular grade level below grade six, that requiring moderate or vigorous daily physical activity is impractical due to scheduling concerns or other factors, the district may as an alternative require a student in that grade level to participate in moderate or vigorous physical activity for at least 135 minutes during the school week.

Middle or Junior High School

In accordance with [TEC, Section 28.002\(l\)](#), a school district must require students enrolled in grade level six, seven, and eight to participate in moderate or vigorous physical activity for at least 30 minutes daily for at least four semesters during those grade levels as part of the district's physical education curriculum. Additionally, a school district may, as an alternative, require a student enrolled in a grade level for which the district uses block scheduling to participate in moderate or vigorous physical activity for at least 225 minutes during each period of two school weeks.

High School

The [19 TAC, Chapter 74, Subchapter B](#), requires students at the secondary level to have one state graduation credit of physical education. In accordance with local district policy, credit for any of the physical education courses approved for state credit can be obtained through participation in the following activities: athletics, Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, drill team, marching band, cheerleading, and Commissioner of Education-approved private or commercially-sponsored activity programs that are held on or off the campus. All substitutions must adhere to the subchapter and must include at least 100 minutes per five-day school week of moderate to vigorous physical activity. Credit may not be earned more than once for Lifetime Fitness and Wellness Pursuits and Skill-Based Lifetime Activities. Credit may not be earned more than twice for Lifetime Recreation and Outdoor Pursuits. No more than four substitution credits may be earned through any combination of substitutions.

Students with Disabilities

In accordance with [TEC, Section 28.002\(d\)](#), public schools must adapt physical education curriculum to accommodate the needs of students with physical and intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Physical Education Courses Earned Through Private or Commercially Sponsored Physical Activity Programs

19 TAC, Chapter 74, Subchapter B, state that in accordance with local district policy, graduation credit for any of the state approved physical education courses may be earned through participation in appropriate private or commercially-sponsored physical activity programs that are conducted on or off campus.

There are two categories of private or commercially-sponsored physical activity programs:

1. Olympic-level participation and/or competition includes a minimum of 15 hours per week of highly intensive, professional, supervised training. The training facility, instructors, and the activities involved in the program must be certified by the superintendent to be of exceptional quality. Students qualifying and participating at this level may be dismissed from school one

hour per day. Students dismissed may not miss any other class than physical education.

2. Private or commercially sponsored physical activities include those certified by the superintendent to be of high quality and well supervised by appropriately trained instructors. Student participation of at least five hours per week must be required. Students certified to participate at this level may not be dismissed from any part of the regular day.

All allowed substitution activity listed above must include at least 100 minutes per five-day school week of moderate to vigorous physical activity. Credit may not be earned more than once for Lifetime Fitness and Wellness Pursuits and Skill-Based Lifetime Activities. Credit may not be earned more than twice for Lifetime Recreation and Outdoor Pursuits. No more than four substitution credits may be earned through any combination of substitutions.

Goals and Objectives for Physical Education Programs

The [TEC, Section 11.253\(a\)](#) states that each school district must maintain current policies and procedures to ensure that effective planning and site-based decision-making occur at each campus to direct and support the improvement of student performance for all students.

TEC 11.253(d)(10) states that if the campus is an elementary, middle, or junior high school, each campus improvement plan must set goals and objectives for the coordinated health program at the campus based on:

- (A) *student fitness assessment data, including any data from research-based assessments such as the school health index assessment and planning tool created by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention;*
- (B) *student academic performance data;*
- (C) *student attendance rates;*
- (D) *the percentage of students who are educationally disadvantaged;*
- (E) *the use and success of any method to ensure that students participate in moderate to vigorous physical activity as required by Section 28.002 (I); and*
- (F) *any other indicator recommended by the local school health advisory council.*

Support for Physical Education

The [Society of Health and Physical Educators \(SHAPE\) America](#), previously known as the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD), recommends standards for health and physical education as part of their organization's mission. SHAPE America released several position statements on physical education, such as [Physical Education is Essential for All Students](#) and [Physical Education Is an Academic Subject](#). SHAPE America also has an [Online Institute](#) to help kindergarten through grade 12 health and physical educators earn and track professional development contact hours. One of those online courses is the free [Essential Components of Physical Education course](#).

The [American Heart Association](#) (AHA) released a position statement on [Increasing and Improving Physical Education in Schools](#). They recommend "more frequent, effective physical education in all schools" that engages students in physical activity and teaches them the knowledge and skills necessary for lifelong physical activity. The AHA recommends 150 minutes of physical education each week for children in elementary school and 225 minutes per week for middle school and high school.

The [American School Health Association](#) strongly recommends the Center for Disease Prevention and Control's (CDC) Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model that includes physical education as one of the ten major components. They also include references to research that showed that health and fitness are linked to improved academic performance, cognitive ability, and behavior as well as reduce truancy."

Texas Association Health Physical Education Recreation and Dance (TAHPERD) emphasizes the importance of physical education for students in their position paper [Appropriate Physical Education Services for All Students](#). They also highlight the importance of physical education for all students, including adapting programs for students with disabilities so they are not excluded from physical education.

Physical Education as Part of Coordinated School Health Model

The Coordinated School Health (CSH) model is a systematic approach to improve student academic performance by promoting, practicing, and coordinating school health education and services to establish lifetime healthy behaviors. All Texas

schools are required by [TEC, Section 38.014](#) to implement a CSH program in grades kindergarten through grade eight. For more information on the CSH model, visit the [Texas Education Agency's \(TEA\) website](#).

Quality physical education is an essential part of creating a successful, comprehensive CSH program within schools. The CDC framework for a CSH program is the [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child \(WSCC\) model](#). The goals of CSH closely align with the WSCC model. The CDC and [Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development](#) developed this model in collaboration with key leaders from the fields of health, public health, education, and school health.

[The WSCC model](#) consists of ten interrelated components: health education; physical education and physical activity; health services; nutrition environment and services; counseling, psychological, and social services; physical environment; employee wellness; social and emotional climate; family engagement; and community involvement. CSH focuses on improving the quality of each of these components and expanding collaboration among the people responsible for them. This coordination allows for a planned, organized, and comprehensive set of courses, services, policies, and interventions that meet the health and safety needs of all students from kindergarten through grade 12. Effective CSH increases the adoption of health-enhancing behaviors, improves student and staff health, as well as student academic performance, and uses resources more efficiently.

Physical Education Guidelines and Best Practices

The following guidelines from the CDC's [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: A Guide for Schools](#) outline the factors that a quality physical education program will encompass:

- Meets the needs of all students;
- Is an enjoyable experience for all students;
- Keeps students active for most of physical education class time;
- Teaches self-management;
- Teaches skills to maximize movement proficiency;
- Emphasizes knowledge and skills for a lifetime of physical activity; and
- Can increase student participation in physical activity, increase physical fitness, and enhance student knowledge and skills about why and how they should be physically active.

SHAPE America published the [Essential Components of Physical Education](#) guidance document for developmentally appropriate physical education practices for elementary, middle, and high school. SHAPE America organizes physical education into four essential components:

1. Policy and environment;
2. Curriculum;
3. Appropriate instruction; and
4. Student assessment.

The resources, guidelines, and best practices listed above show the positive impact of physical education on students and encourages the continued use of physical education curricula in schools. For additional information on Texas physical education curriculum, rules, and news, visit the [TEA Physical Education webpage](#).

Evaluation of Physical Education Programs

The following are examples of research-based skill assessment tools that can be used to evaluate physical education programs:

PE Metrics

[Physical Education \(PE\) Metrics](#) developed by SHAPE America is a standards-based, cognitive, and motor skill assessment package for kindergarten through grade 12. This resource supports the assessment of students' knowledge, skills, and confidence learned in the physical education program against the National Standards and grade-level outcomes. The assessments are designed to be implemented as written or modified to meet the needs of the school and student.

System for Observing Fitness Instruction Time (SOFIT)

Using direct observation, SOFIT assesses the quality of physical education instruction and helps explain how physical activity is influenced by both physical and social environments. SOFIT is a three-phase decision system comprised of student physical activity engagement, lesson context/content, and teacher behavior. [Active Living Research's website](#) has the description and procedure manual for SOFIT.

Physical Fitness Assessment Initiative

As required by [TEC, Section 38.101](#), all Texas students in grade three or higher who are in physical education classes or physical education substitutes are required to take a physical fitness assessment on a yearly basis. School districts are required to submit the results to the TEA through the Physical Fitness Assessment Initiative (PFAI), which is designed to collect and analyze the required student physical fitness data. For more information on the PFAI, visit the [TEA's Physical Fitness Assessment Initiative webpage](#).

Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (PECAT)

[PECAT](#) is the CDC self-assessment and planning guide designed to help schools analyze their physical education curricula based upon national physical education standards. The results of the PECAT can be used to improve, develop, and select physical education curricula. The analysis tool is available both [online](#) and [print](#).

Conclusion

Physical education is a critical component of overall student education. With students spending an average of six hours per day at school, effective physical education curriculum can engage students in physical activity and teach them the knowledge and skills necessary for lifelong physical activity. With many organizations and resources available, school districts can select, implement, and evaluate a physical education curriculum that matches the needs of their schools. School districts are encouraged to use physical education curriculum that contain evidence-based programming and best practices that promote healthy behaviors.