



Superintendent's Circular

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY

This circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded by a subsequent version.

BACKGROUND

Regular physical activity is one of the most important factors affecting health. It helps control weight, reduces the risk of developing cardiovascular disease and diabetes, improves mental health and mood, and increases longevity. Most Boston Public School (BPS) students are not physically active for the 60 minutes per day recommended by the Center for Disease Control. Only 16% of BPS high school students reported being physically active for the recommended time, and only 40% reported having weekly physical education, according to the 2015 Boston High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Twenty-three percent of middle school students reported being physically active for the recommended time and 80% reported having weekly physical education, according to the 2013 Boston Middle School YRBS. This lack of physical activity is contributing to an epidemic of overweight and obesity in BPS students. Measurement of students' Body Mass Index in 1st, 4th, 7th and 10th grades revealed that 39% of BPS students are at an unhealthy weight (2015).

Recent national, cumulative evidence shows clear links between school-based physical activity, including physical education, and academic success. Most of the studies report that physical activity was positively related to academic performance, including academic achievement (grades, standardized test scores); academic behavior (on-task behavior, attendance); and factors that can positively influence academic achievement (concentration, attention, improved classroom behavior). Most importantly, adding time during the school day for physical activity does not appear to take away from academic performance. Given these findings, the BPS recommends that schools increase the amount of time spent in physical education and/or increase the quality of their physical education program, provide recess and physical activity breaks in the classroom, promote walk/ bike to school programs, and offer non-competitive intramural and interscholastic sports.

To improve health and academic outcomes, BPS is implementing strategies to increase the frequency and quality of physical education (PE) and physical activity (PA) for BPS students. A PE & PA Task Force was formed in November 2010 to align the district's PE-related policies and bring the district into compliance with MA General Laws Chapter 71, Section 3 that states:

"Physical education shall be taught as a required subject in all grades for all students in the public schools for the purpose of promoting the physical well-being of students."

With input from BPS principals, physical education teachers, BPS Wellness Council members, BPS department heads, Academic Superintendents, Labor Relations, and other district-leaders, the

PE & PA Taskforce created the PE & PA Policy to align the former BPS policies.

DEFINITIONS

Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP): An approach by which school districts and schools utilize all opportunities for school-based physical activity to develop physically educated students who participate in physical activity each day and develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be physically active for a lifetime. Quality physical education is the cornerstone of a CSPAP. CSPAP also includes school-based physical activity opportunities; school employee wellness and involvement; and family and community involvement.

Physical Education (PE) is a planned, sequential program of curricula and instruction that helps students develop the knowledge, attitudes, motor skills, self-management skills and confidence needed to adopt and maintain physically active lifestyles. PE curricula must align with the BPS PE Frameworks. PE is comprehensive and includes student learning competencies that cross all four strands of the BPS PE Frameworks 1) Movement 2) Health-Related Fitness 3) Personal and Social 4) Lifelong Physical Activity. PE activities that focus on a single activity, such as swimming and dance, count as PE *only* if it is part of a CSPAP and align with the BPS PE Frameworks.

Physical Activity (PA) is a behavior consisting of bodily movement that requires energy expenditure above the normal physiological (muscular, cardiorespiratory) requirements of a typical school day.

Recess, movement breaks, promotional activities, and cross-curricular incorporation are some examples of PA that should NOT be counted as PE; PA is not PE and it cannot be allocated as PE.

Moderate-to-Vigorous Physical Activity (MVPA) is measured by an increase in heart rate, breathing, and body temperature.

Moderate physical activity refers to activities equivalent in intensity to brisk walking or bicycling. Vigorous physical activity produces large increases in breathing or heart rate, such as jogging, aerobic dance or bicycling uphill.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY

The Boston Public Schools is committed to a District-wide, strategic effort to increase all students' physical activity and fitness by bringing more physical education and physical activity to schools; improving the quality of physical education and recess; and increasing the equity of physical activity programs and resources across our schools. Activities will be inclusive to meet the needs, interests, abilities and cultural diversity of all students, including students of all gender identities, students with disabilities, and students with special healthcare needs.

Numerous studies indicate that regularly engaging in moderate-to-vigorous exercise contributes to overall physical and mental health and that nurturing an exercise habit among children lays the foundation for lifelong fitness. Research also shows that increased physical activity increases children's cognitive function, ability to concentrate in class, and academic performance. Thus, as a part of a strategic effort to improve academic performance, BPS recognizes and promotes the benefits of a Comprehensive

Physical Activity Program, where quality physical education is the cornerstone and additional physical activity is integrated throughout the school day and into before and after school programs, staff wellness and family engagement activities.

The Boston Public Schools is committed to a strong athletics program that offers a variety of programs and is accessible to all students. Athletics participation can contribute to student fitness, wellness, character development and a lifelong commitment to a physically active lifestyle. Additionally, by establishing a safe, supportive and engaging school environment, athletic programs encourage school connectedness and create a climate where healthy competition and support fill the school with spirit and a sense of community. Research shows that healthy children are better learners and connected students are more likely to stay in school. In this way, athletics contributes to the academic success of students.

In accordance with state law, all schools must provide all students in all grades with opportunities for physical activity. Schools must offer at least 150 minutes of in-school physical activity weekly in grades PreK-8, including required physical education, movement breaks, recess, or lessons involving movement structured to support moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA). In grades PreK-8, students are expected to have at least 20 minutes of daily recess.

Teachers and other school and community personnel shall not use physical activity (e.g., running laps, pushups) as punishment nor withhold opportunities for physical activity during the school day (including but not limited to recess, classroom physical activity

breaks, or physical education) as punishment for any reason other than illness or safety or as approved by the school leader. This includes denying a student physical activity time in order to make up work unless under unusual circumstances. The district will provide teachers and other school staff with a list of ideas for alternative ways to discipline students.

All schools must offer standards-based physical education (PE) for all students in all grades. Schools are required to offer at least 45 minutes of weekly PE in grades PreK-8 and at least one semester (equivalent of a half school year) of PE each year in grades 9-12. We recommend that schools provide at least 80 minutes of weekly PE in grades PreK-8. In order to help schools work toward this recommendation, Boston Public Schools will develop an implementation plan with input from current principals and headmasters. This implementation plan will be shared with the School Committee.

Teachers and other school and community personnel shall not use physical activity (e.g., running laps, pushups) as punishment; withhold opportunities for physical activity during the school day (including but not limited to recess, classroom physical activity breaks or physical education) as punishment for any reason; or deny a student physical activity time in order to make up work unless under unusual circumstances.

Extended day programs and out of school time, which includes before and after school programs, are expected to offer an array of physical activity opportunities to ensure all students are able to participate. Schools shall offer opportunities for students to participate in physical activity before and after the school day,

including extended day time, through a variety of methods including physical activity clubs, physical activity in before/after school programs, intramurals and interscholastic sports, and in their school commute.

The District recognizes that students benefit from bicycle and pedestrian safety education to help make the trip to and from school safer and instill confidence in students, parents and community members. The District will develop and maintain policies and procedures for working together with city agencies, schools, families, and students in efforts to promote a safer and easier trip to and from school when students and staff are walking, bicycling, using public transit or other means of physically active transport. The District will encourage 7-12th grade students to use public transportation when available and appropriate for travel to school, and will work with the local transit agency to provide transit passes for eligible 7-12th grade students. The District will provide resources to schools, students and families regarding walking, riding a bicycle, using public transit or other forms of active transportation. The District will encourage wellness councils, school administrators and students, staff, families and community partners to assist the District in promoting safe, physically active travel to and from school. Schools are encouraged to designate a transportation liaison to facilitate communication regarding District efforts to promote safe, physically active travel to and from school. Schools shall participate in student transportation surveys when requested to help the District plan for strategies to promote a safer and easier trip to and from school when walking, bicycling, using public transit or other means of physically active transport.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

A. State law requires that all students in grade K-12 receive physical education.

1.) The BPS PE Curriculum must meet the following criteria:

- a. The curriculum is standards-based and it aligns with BPS PE Curriculum Frameworks.
- b. The curriculum provides moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) during at least 50% of PE class time.
- c. The PE scope and sequence for each grade level must include district-sponsored PE curriculum, such as SPARK in K-12th grades and Project Adventure in K-12th grades.

2.) Student assessments in PE must include the following:

- a. Graded competency (i.e. knowledge, skills, practice) and participation (i.e. effort, proper attire, teamwork) assessments that are reflected on all students' report cards.

3.) BPS PE classes have the following requirements for scheduling:

- a. Reflected on all schools' master schedules and on all students' report cards.

4.) Staffing requirements include:

- a. BPS supports a learning environment in which all teachers are highly qualified in the subject areas they teach. Therefore, PE class must be taught by a teacher that holds an active and valid PE teaching license from the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- b. If a school is unable to provide all students in all grades with PE instruction from licensed PE teachers, they should contact the Office of Health and Wellness for support with identifying district-approved staffing alternatives. All PE staffing alternatives must be approved by HR, the Office of Health and Wellness, and the school's respective instructional superintendent. Staffing alternatives are only considered in extenuating circumstances or in situations that increase opportunities for students.

5.). School Wellness Councils are required to develop a school-based Comprehensive School Physical Activity Plan (CSPAP) as a part of the Wellness Action Plan that includes:

- a. A school-based CSPAP Policy that documents the CSPAP Implementation Guidelines.
- b. The CSPAP Implementation Guidelines must outline how all students in grades K-8 are to receive at least 45 minutes of PE per week, and how all students in grades 9-12 receive at least 1 semester of PE per grade.
- c. The CSPAP Implementation Guidelines also include a plan that outlines how the school aims to provide 150 minutes of in-school physical activity in grades k-8, including

required physical education, movement breaks, recess, or lessons involving movement. In grades PreK-8, students are expected to have a minimum of 20 minutes of daily recess; this must be included in the CSPAP.

- d. School staff shall be provided resources to integrate physical activity into their academic lessons. Contact the Office of Health and Wellness for resources.
- e. School wellness councils will work with building principals and Facilities Management/ Planning to identify safe and appropriate indoor and outdoor space for group physical activity and physical education. The lack of identified single-use physical activity spaces (i.e., gymnasiums) will not hinder schools from offering an environment conducive to physical activity and implementation of a CSPAP plan. Examples include:
 - Shared classroom space (mobile physical education classes conducted in classrooms)
 - Schoolyard
 - Creative use of hallway space or other shared spaces in buildings
 - Repurposing classroom or other building spaces for physical activity
 - Co-teaching with other content areas

B. Schools shall offer daily physical activity opportunities during the school day.

To that end principals/heads of school can:

- a. Integrate daily physical activity into the classroom

- setting with kinesthetic learning, cross-curricular lessons, and team teaching
- b. Encourage short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes, as appropriate
- c. Encourage school-wide physical activity promotions like pedometer challenges, field day, dance-a-thon, walk-a-thon, active transport, etc.
- d. Provide opportunities for daily recess with at least 20 minutes a day of supervised recess, preferably outdoors, during which time staff encourage moderate to vigorous activity and provide appropriate space and equipment. In grades K-8, daily recess is required.
- e. Schedule recess before lunch so that students will come to lunch less distracted and ready to eat.

C. Schools shall offer daily physical activity opportunities during extended day programs and out of school time which includes before and after school programs.

To that end principals/headmasters can:

- a. Allow school spaces and facilities to be available for school-sponsored activities that promote fitness for its students during extended and non-school hours, as circumstances permit.
- b. Remain in alignment with best practices and requirements for licensed school-age care programs partnering with schools (606 CMR 7). Specifically
 - o Providing daily indoor and outdoor time periods, weather permitting, which include both small and

- large muscle activities;
- Each school shall dedicate at least 30-60 minutes of morning or afterschool program time to physical activity for all students;
- c. Partner with local government and community-based agencies to support active transport to school by reducing/eliminating hazards and increasing accessibility (i.e., bicycle parking).

D. Safe Routes to School Boston

The District will encourage students to be physically active before and after school by promoting walking/ biking/rolling to school through a comprehensive Safe Routes to School Boston program, including encouragement, education, evaluation, engineering/environment, enforcement, and equity strategies. Schools should include Safe Routes to School in their Annual Wellness Action Plans.

- a. *Equity strategies*: Consider the barriers and concerns, and opportunities that face families and ensure equitable opportunities in each strategy of this initiative.
- b. Encouragement strategies:
 - Walking Promotions (e.g. Walk to School Days, Walking Challenges, School-wide Promotions)
 - Establishing a school Park and Walk site
 - Walking School Buses
- c. Education strategies:

- Implementing an active transportation safety curriculum in health or physical education.
 - Developing and disseminating preferred Walking Route Maps that provide students and parents with the additional tools to travel safely to and from school.
 - Disseminating walking tips and simple pedestrian safety information and promotional materials.
- d. Evaluation of Need strategies:
- Conduct a walk audit to identify concerns regarding the physical/environmental conditions that surround your school.
 - Conduct a travel hand tally to understand the impact and number of students that will benefit.
- e. Engineering/Environment strategies:
- Alert proper authorities regarding environmental safety concerns. Engineering or other environmental issues should be reported through BOS: 311, other pressing concerns should be reported to BPS Transportation.
 - Increase accessibility and support for those choosing to ride by installing secure bicycle storage and designating facilities for storing other wheeled devices like scooters.
- f. *Enforcement strategies*: Share Preferred Walking Routes with local police stations for proper crossing guard assignment and heightened awareness on popular routes.

E. Community Partnerships

Providing students and families with access to safe, affordable, and convenient places to be physically active is an important strategy for promoting health and reducing risk for obesity. Community partners are a vital, valuable aspect of quality physical activity programs and can meaningfully support PE and PA in BPS. School officials are encouraged to work with partners to develop a written joint use agreement that delineates the terms and conditions for joint use and the responsibilities of all parties. Community partners must follow the BPS Community Partner Policy. To that end, principals/heads of school can work with community partners to:

- a. Secure mini-grant funding
- b. Use of facilities on and off-campus
- c. Training/professional development
- d. Assist with program implementation
- e. Work with community partners to create additional opportunities that meet the unique needs of their school

F. Physical Activity and Punishment

Teachers and other school and community personnel **shall not:**

- a. Use physical activity (e.g., running laps, pushups) as punishment
- b. Withhold opportunities for physical activity during the school day (including but not limited to recess, classroom physical activity breaks or physical education) as punishment for any reason

- c. Deny a student physical activity time in order to make up work unless under unusual circumstances

The district will provide teachers and other school staff with a list of ideas for alternative ways to discipline students.

MONITORING, COMPLIANCE & SUPPORT

1. Monitoring Curriculum

- a. Scope and Sequence: Each school must annually submit a PE scope and sequence for each grade level to the School Wellness Councils; the scope and sequences must align with BPS PE Curriculum Frameworks. The Office of Health and Wellness can support schools in aligning their PE scope and sequence with the BPS PE Curriculum Frameworks. If necessary, the School Wellness Councils may be asked to submit the school's PE scope and sequence.

2. Monitoring Assessments

- a. Report Cards: All students' report cards must include a grade for taking PE class.

3. Monitoring school-based Comprehensive School Physical Activity Plan (CSPAP)

- a. Wellness Actions Plans: School Wellness Councils'

CSPAP will include their school-based CSPAP Policy that outlines how all students in all grades will receive weekly physical activity.

- b. The Office of Health and Wellness will monitor School Wellness Councils' CSPAP.
 - c. The Office of Health and Wellness will monitor the community partner's compliance with the BPS Community Partner Policy..
4. Monitoring Scheduling and Graduation Requirements
- a. Master Schedules: All schools must reflect adequate PE on their master schedule.
 - b. Student Report Cards: All students' report cards must include PE to determine compliance with the PE & PA Policy and to determine students' graduation eligibility.
5. Monitoring Staffing:
- a. Staffing Reports: The Office of Human Capital will annually conduct PE staffing reports for each school. The PE staffing reports will be monitored to determine compliance with the PE Staffing Policy for BPS.
6. The Office of Health and Wellness will support schools in their efforts by providing:
- a. Yearly professional development opportunities for both physical education teachers and school-based personnel

- b. Professional development opportunities for recess-based personnel
- c. Schools shall be provided resources to integrate physical activity into their academic lessons
- d. Resources available for school staff include:
 - Field-day guides
 - Physical Activity Curriculum
 - Physical Activity Breaks
 - Recess temperature recommendations
 - Active Recess materials
 - Guide to Before and After School Activities
 - A list of physical activity community partners and contact information

7. Schools Non-Compliant with PE & PA Policy:

The principal and relevant school superintendent will be notified by the Office of Health and Wellness if a school is found not to be compliant. The Office of Health and Wellness will work directly with the school to support the development of a CSPAP Improvement Plan that puts the school on track for compliance with the PE & PA Policy.

School administration, teachers, families, students, community-based organizations, and wellness councils will be provided information about the policy to engage and support implementation, monitoring, and compliance. The BPS Office of Health and Wellness will provide an implementation guide that will include strategies and support for professional development, curriculum, partnership development, instructional materials, school-based PA strategies, and other resources.

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