

Physical Activity in Schools Law AS14.30.360

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Alaska’s Physical Activity in Schools law?

The Physical Activity in Schools law, (full title is “An Act relating to health education and physical activity requirements for students in grades kindergarten through eight”), began as SB 200 and was passed into law in April 2016. The actual statute amended by this law is [AS.14.30.360 Curriculum](#), subsections (c) and (d).

The law states that *“a school district shall establish guidelines for schools in the district to provide opportunities during each full school day for students in **grades kindergarten through eight**, for a minimum of 90 percent of the daily amount of physical activity recommended....by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, United States Department of Health and Human Services...”*

Why was the law adopted?

Research has shown that physical activity benefits students’ physical, mental and cognitive health. Physical activity positively affects perception, memory, judgment, focus and reasoning, and increases scores on verbal and mathematics tests as well as overall academic performance.¹ In the classroom, physical activities are a great way to get students’ minds refreshed and more focused on the lesson, which means that students will be more engaged in their learning. Any amount of time spent doing physical activity increases the quality of students’ learning.

When did the law become effective?

The law became effective October 16, 2016, 90 days after Governor Walker signed the legislation on July 16, 2016.

What is 90% of the daily physical activity recommendation for students?

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends 60 minutes of physical activity daily for children and adolescents. Ninety percent of the daily recommendation equates to 54 minutes a day.

Do district guidelines have to provide opportunities for 54 minutes of physical activity for grades K-8 every day?

The law states a district shall establish guidelines to provide opportunities for 54 minutes of physical activity during each **full school day** for students in grades K-8. Guidelines for half days or early release days do not have to meet the full 54 minutes.

¹ CDC. Health and Academic Achievement. 5/2014. Available at https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf

What can be included in the 54 minutes of physical activity a day?

The 54 minutes may include options such as recess (structured or unstructured), school-wide activities, physical education (PE) classes, free gym time and in-classroom physical activity. The State of Alaska School Health program has created a document [here](#) providing a variety of options for meeting the 54 minutes of daily physical activity. [The Play Every Day website](#) is a resource that has a variety of promotional materials encouraging students to play 60 minutes a day, some of which are applicable to the school day.

Can the 54 minutes include before and after school activities?

While before and after school activities are beneficial to student health and learning, the law states that the district shall establish guidelines to provide opportunities for 54 minutes of physical activity *during* each full school day for students in K-8. This is exclusive of before and after school activities.

What if the school doesn't have PE scheduled every day?

The physical activity minutes do not have to occur in a PE class. The minutes can be met through recess, school-wide activities, free gym time and in-classroom physical activity. The School Health program website [document](#) has a variety of scheduling options for days with and without PE.

Does this law impact a district's ability to offer waivers for PE credit?

The law does not impact a district's ability to allow waivers for PE credit.

What is "in-classroom physical activity"?

In-classroom physical activity is any activity done in the classroom during a regular class period. In-classroom activities are a great way to get students' minds refreshed and more focused on the lesson, which means that students will be more engaged in their learning. Teachers can integrate physical activity in between or into lessons. Even a 3-minute activity can increase mental alertness and focus.¹

A list of in-classroom activity resources can be found [here](#) on the School Health program webpage and [here](#) on the Society of Health and Physical Educators Alaska (SHAPE Alaska) website under Printable Resources.

What are "school-wide activities"?

School-wide activities are those where all students participate in the activity at the same time. Some ideas are: (1) a movement video that is displayed in every classroom at a set time during the school day; (2) a mileage walk where all students walk a route in the hallways for time and distance; or (3) a student/teacher-led activity break over the school loudspeaker.

Is establishing guidelines to provide opportunities for physical activity in schools optional?

The law states a district “***shall*** establish guidelines for schools in the district to provide opportunities.....for 54 minutes of daily physical activity.” Districts can decide the format of these guidelines.

Who is going to monitor compliance?

Designation of this role and development of any system to monitor compliance is a local district decision.

How can our district monitor compliance?

Simple options for assessing compliance could include posting schedules indicating school wide physical activity times like recess or movement breaks or requesting lesson plans indicating classroom-based physical activity. Assessment of implementation of the Physical Activity in Schools law could also be incorporated and documented in the district’s regularly scheduled review process of the Student Nutrition and Physical Activity policy (aka [Wellness Policy](#)).

What if a student is unable to participate for a medical reason?

Exemptions can be made if a student is unable to participate for a medical reason. Districts already comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ([IDEA](#)) legislation to provide inclusive physical education and physical activity services for students with disabilities.

What happens when recess has to be cancelled due to inclement weather?

Exemptions can be made due to unexpected inclement weather. Most districts have inclement weather policies. Schools are encouraged to plan for indoor alternatives that include opportunities for physical activity.

Won’t the in-classroom physical activities take time away from classroom time?

In-classroom physical activity enhances the learning process. Research has shown that physical activity benefits children’s physical, mental and cognitive health. It affects perception, memory, judgment, focus and reasoning. Physical activity increases scores on verbal and mathematics tests and overall academic performance.¹

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