



Physical Activity

Exercise and regular physical activity have both immediate and long-term positive effects on health.

As students advance to older grades, they are progressively less likely to engage in adequate vigorous physical activity. Students in each grade reported how often they exercised vigorously three or more days a week:



- 82 percent of 6th graders.
- 77 percent of 8th graders.
- 70 percent of 10th graders.
- 61 percent of 12th graders.

Physical Activity Policies and Procedures

Required Physical Education (PE) Courses

Washington State law (WAC 180-50-135(1)) requires all students in Grades 1–8 to receive an average of at least 100 instructional minutes per week per year in physical education. Minimum Washington high school graduation requirements include satisfactory completion of two credits in “health and fitness” (WAC 180-51-061).

Most secondary schools (96 percent) required physical education (PE). More than 90 percent of middle school principals reported that PE was required for students in each of Grades 6, 7, and 8. About half of high school principals reported that students in Grades 11 or 12 were required to take PE. Principals reported the number of PE courses students are required to complete:

- 6 percent take 1 course.
- 67 percent take 2–3 courses.
- 20 percent take 4–5 courses.
- 7 percent take 6 or more courses.

Principals reported most (95 percent) high school students who fail a required PE course are required to repeat it. Thirteen percent of middle school students are required to repeat a failed PE course.

Similar to reports of principals, middle school students (8th grade) reported having PE classes more often than high school students (Grades 10 and 12). The number of days in an average school week that students say they attend physical education:

	8th	10th	12th
0 days	30%	49%	62%
1 day	2%	2%	1%
2 days	2%	3%	2%
3 days	6%	7%	7%
4 days	5%	10%	5%
5 days	55%	31%	24%



Student reported participation in PE is somewhat lower than indicated by Profiles and the classes offered. Because the Healthy Youth Survey is completed in the fall, it is possible that schools rotating PE with other courses (such as health) on a quarter/semester basis would result in a student not being enrolled in PE at the time of the survey. If PE classes are a main source of physical activity for students, this approach also means that many students are not continuously participating in physical activity throughout the year.



About 30 percent of 8th graders and almost 50 percent of 10th graders report not taking a PE class at the time of the survey.

Physical Activity Opportunities at Schools

Not all physical activity for youth happens in the classroom. Opportunities for physical activity outside of PE classes are important for increasing physical activity among students.

Most principals (89 percent) report that their schools activity or athletic facilities are available for use for community-sponsored sports teams or physical activity programs outside of school hours or when school is not in session.



The majority of secondary schools have organized opportunities for students to participate in physical activity: 59 percent of high school and 76 percent of middle school principals reported that students are offered opportunities to participate in before- or after-school intramural activities or physical activity clubs.

Transportation can be a barrier to student participation in after-school physical activity opportunities. Thirty-one percent of high schools and 56 percent of middle school principals reported that transportation to home is provided for students who participate in after-school intramural activities or physical activity clubs.

Physical Activity Instruction

Physical activity instruction encompasses a variety of topics. Health teachers reporting teaching each of the following physical activity topics in a required health education course:

- 94 percent taught physical, psychological, or social benefits of physical activity.
- 93 percent taught health-related fitness (cardio and muscular endurance, strength, flexibility, and body composition).
- 83 percent taught about the effects of decreasing sedentary activities such as television watching.
- 80 percent taught the phases of a workout.
- 80 percent taught the dangers of muscle enhancing drugs like steroids.
- 79 percent taught how to prevent injury during activity.
- 77 percent taught how much physical activity is enough.
- 69 percent taught community opportunities for activity.
- 68 percent developed activity plans.
- 67 percent taught about weather-related safety.
- 66 percent taught how to set goals and monitor progress.
- 61 percent taught overcoming barriers to activity.



About 64 percent of 8th graders and 48 percent of 10th graders report they spend more than 20 minutes during an average PE class exercising or playing sports.

Physical Activity Staff Development

More health teachers reported wanting to receive staff development in fitness than actually received it:

- About 35 percent of health educators reported receiving staff development in physical activity and fitness.
- About 52 percent reported wanting to receive more staff development in physical activity.

Most secondary schools now require credentials for new instructors: 89 percent of principals reported new PE teachers or specialists are required to be certified, licensed, or endorsed by the state in physical education (health and fitness).

Physical Activity Resources

Information about Washington Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) is available at the OSPI Health and Fitness Web site: <http://www.k12.wa.us/curriculumInstruct/healthfitness/resources.aspx>.

Resources for implementation of new health and fitness policy requirements as a result of SB 5436 are provided at: <http://depts.washington.edu/waschool>.

And for additional information on physical activity and physical education, visit these Web sites:
Centers for Disease Control
<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physicalactivity/>

The National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity:
<http://www.ncppa.org/landmarkreports.asp>

The Washington Alliance for Health Physical Education, Recreation and Dance: <http://www.wahped.com>.