

Appendix C. Physical Education, Physical Activity, and Athletics

Physical education, physical activity, and athletics each hold an extremely important place in the educational system. And each has a specific meaning in the 2016 Health Education and Physical Education K–12 Learning Standards.

Why Physical Education?

We believe that every student, from kindergarten through 12th grade, should have the opportunity to participate in high-quality physical education. Quality physical education programs help all students develop health-related fitness, physical competence, cognitive understanding, and positive attitudes about physical activity so that they can adopt healthy and physically active lifestyles.

Inactivity is a leading cause of preventable death.

School-based physical education can make an important contribution to the health of the next generation of Americans and global citizen.

Quality physical education programs are also important because they provide learning experiences that meet children’s developmental needs, which in turn helps to improve mental alertness, academic performance, and readiness and enthusiasm for learning.

In addition to the health benefits, there is growing evidence that regular physical activity enhances learning and school achievement. In the same way that exercise benefits the muscles, heart, lungs, and bones, it also strengthens key areas of the brain. Physical activity fuels the brain with oxygen, enhances connections between neurons, and assists in memory. Children in daily physical activity have shown superior academic performance and more positive attitudes toward school.

The 2016 Washington State K–12 Learning Standards provide schools and teachers with a guide for creating aligned curricula and learning experiences in health and physical education. The intent of health education is to help students understand how to achieve and maintain good health for a lifetime. The intent of physical education is to help students learn the skills necessary for performing a variety of physical activities and understand the benefits of achieving and maintaining a physically active lifestyle. The practice of leading a healthy and physically active lifestyle will bring about personal enjoyment, challenge, satisfaction, and a health-enhancing level of personal fitness.

The Relationship Between Physical Education and Physical Activity

The terms “physical education” and “physical activity” are often used interchangeably. However, they mean two different things. While it is very important to provide physical activity during the day, without physical education, the activity may focus on fitness with limited opportunity to increase students’ knowledge and skills related to appropriate motor development.

What Is Physical Education?

Physical education is defined as 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 a physically active and healthy lifestyle.

An understanding of good health and of physical education concepts and practices is essential for all students. The physical education course is the environment in which students learn, practice, and are assessed on developmentally appropriate motor skills, social skills, and knowledge as defined by the Washington State K–12 Learning Standards (formerly referred to as Essential Academic Learning Requirements [EALRs]) and related outcomes (formerly referred to as Grade-Level Expectations [GLEs]). The physical education setting, whether gym, field, or multipurpose room, is the classroom in which the physical education curriculum is taught, by a certified physical education specialist. This class and classroom should be treated with the same level of professional concern as other essential academic disciplines and learning environments.

A positive physical education experience can inspire students about physical activity. When children learn and have the time to develop and practice skills, they have increasing opportunities to find enjoyment in sport and physical education, an experience that can carry into an active adult lifestyle. Quality physical education can create active and healthier adults.

What Is Physical Activity?

Physical activity is [defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) as “any bodily movement produced by the contraction of skeletal muscle that increases energy expenditure above a basal level.”

Regular physical activity in childhood and adolescence improves strength and endurance, helps build healthy bones and muscles, helps control weight, reduces anxiety and stress, increases self-esteem, and may improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Exercise is a subset of physical activity that is planned, structured, and repetitive and done to improve or maintain physical fitness.

To master basic and advanced motor skills, students need time to learn and practice. Physical activity and exercise are the application of the knowledge and skills learned in the physical

education class. Quality physical education develops students who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity. To ensure equal access to quality physical education and physical activity for all students in Washington state, physical education offerings must meet state learning standards and outcomes in all respects.

A quality physical education program includes:

- Curriculum that aligns with state learning standards and outcomes for health and physical education.
- Curriculum taught by a certified health and physical education teacher.
- Appropriate time and space for students to learn and practice skills, with appropriate supplies.
- Instruction and assessment in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

The Relationship Between Physical Education and Athletics

Athletics are a valuable part of school life. However, because athletics are optional extracurricular activities, they do not promote participation by all students. Athletics are enrichment activities, while physical education is a component of the curriculum. Athletics thus cannot replace physical education, but contribute valuable additional physical activity time to involved students. Physical education, meanwhile, can enhance student interest in athletics and successful learning in school and beyond.

What Is Athletics?

Athletics is defined as an active sport that requires physical exertion and competition and involves a contest between athletes. Participation in athletics (sports) events is an extracurricular activity. Involvement in athletics is critical to some students. Yet even these students need quality physical education to guarantee the opportunity to learn what a physically educated person should know and be able to do once opportunities for high school athletics are no longer available.

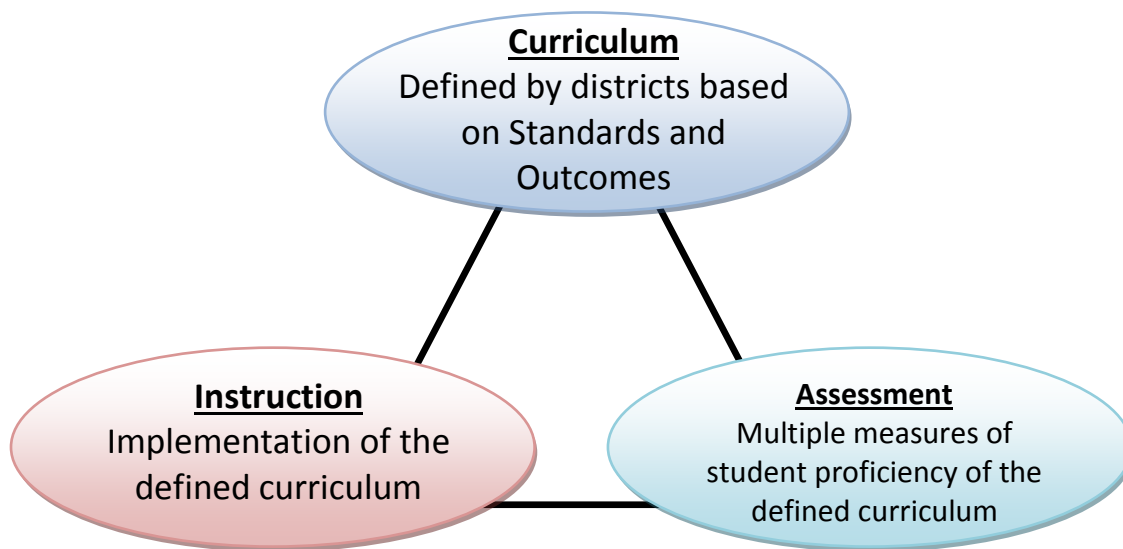
While athletics typically focuses on one sport, or on one sport at a time, physical education teaches the skills and concepts students will need for safe and healthy participation in physical activity across the life span.

Physical Activity is a BEHAVIOR

and

Physical Education is a CURRICULUM
that helps create and support physical activity.

*Quality physical education leads to a
lifetime of physical activity.*



**Physical education is Instruction, Curriculum,
and Assessment all together, where physical
activity is any type of movement.**

Physical inactivity is part of the problem of overweight youth. Physical activity is part of the solution. Physical education is a critical component to increasing physical activity.

School physical education programs are the one place that:

1. **All** children can participate in regular physical activity.
2. **All** children can become physically educated for a lifetime of physical activity.