

**Virginia Board of Education**  
**Physical Education and Physical Activity Program Guidelines**  
**For Public Elementary and Middle Schools**

**I. Introduction**

The 2012 General Assembly approved HB 1092 requiring the Virginia Board of Education to develop physical education program guidelines for public elementary and middle schools in collaboration with the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, the American Academy of Pediatrics, Virginia Chapter, the Virginia Association of School Superintendents, the Virginia School Boards Association, and other interested stakeholders.

Physical education is an academic discipline that involves the study of human movement and its impact on health and quality of life. Physical education in schools provides all students access to standards-based instruction to develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, motivation and confidence needed to engage in health-enhancing physical activity needed to achieve and maintain a balanced, healthy life. It offers many opportunities for students to build positive interpersonal relationships, improve self-esteem, set goals, apply strategies to enhance performance, exercise self-management skills, collaborate, and develop a sense of social responsibility. It also promotes the development and use of effective communication, collaboration, civic responsibility, and critical and creative thinking skills, and provides a meaningful foundation for further study in preparation for careers related to the health sciences. In an increasingly sedentary world, schools provide the best opportunity for a population-based approach to enhance the physical, mental, and social development of every child through learning and engaging in a variety of motor skills. Physical education and physical activity have short- and long-term influences on the physical, cognitive, and psychosocial health and development of children and adolescents.

These guidelines pertain to physical education, which should not be confused with physical activity. Physical education is a planned, sequential, quality instructional program that helps students acquire the knowledge, processes, skills, and confidence needed to make healthy decisions, learn the skills necessary for performing a variety of physical activities and understand the benefits of achieving and maintaining a physically active lifestyle. By contrast, physical activity is any bodily movement that is produced by the contraction of skeletal muscles that increases energy expenditure.

As a result of physical education instruction, the student will be able to:

- Acquire, apply, and evaluate movement concepts and strategies to respond confidently, competently, and creatively in a variety of physical activity settings;
- Access, evaluate, and synthesize health-related information to protect, enhance, and advocate for health, well-being, safety, and participation in physical activity across a lifespan; and
- Enjoy and engage in regular movement-based learning experiences and understand and appreciate their significance to personal, social, cultural, and environmental health practices and outcomes.

**II. Guidelines**

Physical education programs should:

1. Provide students with an opportunity to learn health-enhancing concepts and skills.

*Indicators:*

- In accordance with the Standards of Quality, § 22.1-253.13:1 of the Code of Virginia: (Applicable beginning with the 2018-2019 school year) 15. A program of physical activity available to all students in grades kindergarten through five consisting of at least 20 minutes per day or an average of 100 minutes per week during the regular school year and available to all students in grades six through 12 with a goal of at least 150 minutes per week on average during the regular school year. Such program may include any combination of (i) physical education classes, (ii) extracurricular athletics, (iii) recess, or (iv) other programs and physical activities deemed appropriate by the local school board. Each local school board shall *implement* such programs during the regular school year.
- Elementary and middle schools provide each student a program of instruction which corresponds to the *Standards of Learning* for physical education and health consistent with the provisions of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (8 VAC 20-131 et seq.);
- Qualified health and physical education teachers provide instruction for all students, including students with disabilities; and
- Schools provide adequate equipment, technology, and facilities that provide healthy, safe, active, and equitable learning experiences.

*Guidance:*

All elementary and middle school students in Virginia have the opportunity to benefit from physical education. Knowledge about human movement is fundamental to optimizing health and performance, and preventing injury and illness. Students with special needs receive physical education instruction in the least restrictive environment, and physical education is available equally to children with disabilities and children without disabilities.

1. Students are taught by qualified health and physical education teachers who use effective interdisciplinary instructional practices that supports learning for all students. Schools provide adequate facilities and equipment, adequate time for instruction, and class size that supports high-quality instruction and ensures student safety.
  2. Schools ensure the physical education curriculum articulates both the competencies necessary for lifelong learning and the competencies needed for holistic social, emotional and physical development.
  3. Schools adopt strategies to maximize opportunities for children to participate in high-quality physical education and physical activity to improve health, and prevent and control chronic diseases.
2. Ensure meaningful content and skills are included in the physical education curriculum.

*Indicators:*

- School divisions develop and implement standards-based curricula and assessments based on the *Physical Education Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools*, which identify

essential skills, knowledge, and dispositions that students should demonstrate to reach the outcomes stated in the standards for kindergarten through grade twelve.

- The content of the *Standards of Learning* for physical education is organized around the following five essential strands of health and physical development and application:
  - a. Motor Skill Development;
  - b. Anatomical Basis of Movement;
  - c. Fitness Planning;
  - d. Social Development; and
  - e. Energy Balance.
- The standards in each strand are sequenced to progress in complexity from grade level to grade level. Achieving the performance expectations from the previous grade level serves as the foundation for attaining the benchmarks at the next level.
- School divisions adopt an instructional sequence and program that best serves their own students.

*Guidance:*

The *Physical Education Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools* establish minimum expectations for what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade or course in physical education, and are intended to support the following goals for students:

- Demonstrate competence in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities. Student learning focuses on the development and demonstration of competence in motor skills and a variety of movement forms, increasing the likelihood of participation in physical activities. (Motor Skill Development)
- Apply knowledge of the structures and functions of the body and how they relate to and are affected by human movement in learning and developing motor skills and specialized movement forms. Student learning focuses on understanding basic anatomy and physiology, along with movement concepts and principles, to improve motor skills. (Anatomical Basis of Movement)
- Achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of personal fitness. Student learning focuses on the importance of fitness and active lifestyles, ability to evaluate personal fitness levels, and to create an appropriate fitness plan with goals, activities, and timelines that will maintain and improve their levels of physical fitness. Recommended criterion-referenced wellness testing includes: Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run (PACER), cadence push-ups, cadence curl-ups, back-saver sit and reach, and trunk lift (Fitness Planning)
- Demonstrate the aptitude, attitude, and skills to lead responsible, fulfilling, and respectful lives. Student learning focuses on communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, goal setting and attainment, critical and creative thinking, resilience, and self-directed learning. (Social Development)
- Explain the importance of energy balance and nutritional needs of the body to maintain optimal health and prevent chronic disease. Student learning focuses on nutrition and functional fitness concepts and the importance of energy balance for physical health and chronic disease prevention. (Energy Balance)

- Additional information about the [\*Physical Education Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools\*](#) and related resources are available at <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/physed/index.shtml>.

3. Ensure students are taught by qualified health and physical education teachers.

*Indicators:*

- Health and physical education teachers meet or exceed the [\*Standards of Professional Practice for Teachers of Health and Physical Education\*](#), [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/regulations/uniform\\_performance\\_stds\\_2011.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/regulations/uniform_performance_stds_2011.pdf)
- Health and physical education teachers are supported through regular, high-quality professional development opportunities.

*Guidance:*

The *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards for Teachers* include seven performance standards. The first six (professional knowledge, instructional delivery, assessment of and for student learning, learning environment, professionalism, and instructional planning), are key elements that describe the knowledge that teachers possess and actions that they take to advance student learning. The seventh performance standard is student academic progress.

Effective classroom management techniques and engaging instruction are used to maximize student learning. Instructional planning begins with a curriculum scope and sequence that is aligned to the *Standards of Learning*; connects instruction with prior learning; makes topics relevant to students' lives and experiences; and ensures mastery of knowledge, concepts, and skills.

Delivery of instruction in physical education includes strategies, resources, materials, and tools for the sequencing of learning experiences that are designed to engage all students in active learning.

4. Encourage students to be physically active and become physically fit for life.

*Indicators:*

- Curricula focuses student learning on understanding the relationship between a health-enhancing level of physical fitness and the prevention of chronic disease, and provides students, teachers, and parents with the necessary information to design an individualized program of fitness.
- Schools implement a comprehensive approach to promoting physical activity, both in school and settings outside of school, and help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, and confidence needed to be physically active for life.

*Guidance:*

A well-designed physical education curriculum integrates the five components of fitness, and improves the fitness of students using sound training principles and best practices. Students who participate in physical education programs that promote personal fitness and encourage daily

physical activity will be more likely to become physically fit and responsible in their physical activity choices and behaviors for a lifetime.

### **III. Virginia Laws and Regulations Related to Physical Education**

#### **Code of Virginia**

Virginia Standards of Quality

<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/quality/index.shtml>

§ 22.1-200. Subjects taught in elementary grades.

§ 22.1-207. Physical and health education.

§ 22.1-253.13:1. Standard 1. Instructional programs supporting the Standards of Learning and other educational objectives.

#### **Regulations**

Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter131/>

8VAC20-131-70. Program of instruction and learning objectives.

8 VAC 20-131-80. Instructional program in elementary schools.

8 VAC 20-131-90. Instructional program in middle schools.

8VAC20-131-220. Role of professional teaching staff.

8 VAC 20-131-240. Administrative and support staff; staffing requirements.

8VAC20-131-260. School facilities and safety.

### **IV. References and Resources**

- Health Smart Virginia curriculum and instructional resources for social, emotional, physical and environmental health:  
<https://healthsmartva.org/>
- Governor's Healthy Virginians Web site:  
<http://www.healthylvirginians.virginia.gov/index.cfm>
- Joint Committee of the Board of Education and Board of Health Final Report, September 2004: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/VA\\_Board/BOE-BOH-Report.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/VA_Board/BOE-BOH-Report.pdf)
- Scorecard for the Governor's Nutrition and Physical Activity and Program:  
<http://www.virginia.gov/doe/login.html>
- Superintendent's Memo No. 114-17, April 14, 2017, Local Wellness Policy:  
[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents\\_memos/2017/114-17.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2017/114-17.shtml)
- Virginia Department of Education Health Education:  
<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/health/index.shtml>
- Virginia Department of Education Physical Education:  
<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/physed/index.shtml>

- Virginia Department of Education Driver Education:  
[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/driver\\_education/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/driver_education/index.shtml)