

# 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...”

### 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.

### Is compliance with the Physical Activity Schools law optional?

The language of the law states a district “**shall** establish guidelines for schools in the district to provide opportunities.....for 54 minutes of daily physical activity”. A school is meeting the intent of the law if their schedule provides each K-8 student opportunities for 54 minutes of daily physical activity within each school day.

### Will waivers be allowed for districts or schools?

The law does not include any process for districts or schools to request a waiver.

### What if school schedules are already set for the year?

October 16, 2016 was the implementation date. Schools and classroom teachers can start now by incorporating some physical activity into their classroom lessons. Schools can also start preparing for

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<sup>1</sup> CDC. Health and Academic Achievement. 5/2014. Available at [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health\\_and\\_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf)

the 2017-2018 school year by making any necessary changes to the daily schedule and/or staffing levels regarding recess, PE or school-wide physical activity breaks.

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

The Centers for Disease Control recommends 60 minutes of physical activity daily for children and adolescents. The bill was written requiring 90% of the daily recommendation which equates to 54 minutes a day.

### **Do schools have to provide 54 minutes of physical activity for grades K-8 every day?**

Yes, 54 minutes every full school day for grades K-8. Half days or early release days don't count.

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

The 54 minutes may include 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?**

No, the 54 minutes must be provided during the regular instructional day.

### **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.

### **What if our district or school allows waivers for physical education (PE)?**

Allowing PE waivers is a district by district decision. This law does not address the practice of allowing PE waivers for students. However, the district/school must provide opportunities for 54 minutes of physical activity daily for grades K-8 with or without PE.

### **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.<sup>1</sup>

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.

## **Who is going to monitor compliance?**

Designation of this role is a district by district decision. Compliance can be assessed through posted schedules indicating school wide physical activity times like recess or movement breaks, as well as sample lesson plans indicating classroom-based physical activity. Reporting on implementation of the Mandatory Physical Activity in Schools law should be incorporated in the district’s next required review 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 PE/PA 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. Districts should have clear inclement weather policies and 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.<sup>1</sup> Any amount of time spent doing physical activity only increases the quality of students learning.

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