



# Physical Education in the 2020-21 School Year: Recommendations and Resources

## Contents

Physical Education in the 2020-21 School Year: Recommendations and Resources .....	1
Introduction: Critical Minnesota Health Guidelines .....	2
The Goal of Physical Education.....	2
Keep the “E” in Physical Education .....	3
Minnesota Physical Education Requirements .....	3
Considerations for Physical Education in the Fall, 2020 .....	3
Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility .....	4
Social Emotional Learning .....	4
Trauma-Centered Learning Environment.....	4
School-wide Strategies.....	5
Physical Education Instructional Considerations.....	5
Physical Education Instructional Strategies Relevant to all Scenarios.....	5
Considerations for In-School Physical Education Instruction.....	6
Considerations for Distance Learning For Physical Education Instruction.....	8
Considerations for Hybrid Learning Physical Education Instruction.....	9
Activities.....	10
Assessment.....	10
Resources and References .....	11
Minnesota Documents.....	11
National Documents .....	11

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## **Introduction: Critical Minnesota Health Guidelines**

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed how schools operate and brought to the forefront the importance of prioritizing the health and well-being of all school personnel and students. The [Minnesota State Learning Plan for 2020-21: A Localized, Data-Driven Approach](#) identifies public health guidelines that are to be utilized by schools to determine how they will operate during the 2020-21 school year. The [2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools](#) from the [Minnesota Department of Health](#) (MDH) provides guidance for school leaders around policies, practices and strategies that schools must implement; as well as recommendations they should consider to optimize education and promote health and safety, while mitigating risk throughout the school year. The document directed schools to develop plans for three scenarios:

- **Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students**
- **Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits**
- **Scenario 3: Distance learning only**

This Minnesota Department of Health document is to be used in combination with additional guidance provided by the [Minnesota Department of Education's 2020-21 Planning Guidance for Minnesota Public Schools](#) that identifies guiding principles and vital information for schools as they formulate their plans for the fall of 2020.

All of these resources contain crucial information that are foundational around the responsibilities of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and contain relevant information physical educators should be aware of as they are planning for the 2020-21 school year. The purpose of this resource is to identify pertinent foundational information in all of these documents that apply specifically to physical education.

## **The Goal of Physical Education**

The goal of physical education is to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity. To fulfill a lifetime of physical activity, a physically literate individual:

- Has learned the skills necessary to participate in a variety of physical activities;
- Knows the implications and the benefits of involvement in various types of activities
- Participates in regular physical activity;
- Is physically fit;
- Values physical activity and its contribution to a healthful lifestyle.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic does not change the goal of physical education; however, there are considerations that apply in implementing programming. Information in this document is an effort to identify those considerations based on the three potential reopening scenarios in the fall.

## Keep the “E” in Physical Education

The spring of 2020 required a quick response from physical educators to change from in-person instruction in the gymnasium to meeting the outcomes of physical education through distance learning. Due to the quick response required, many programs became fitness-focused or simply provided movement activities to keep students moving without being aligned to their spring programming learning expectations. While it was understandable under those circumstances, physical educators have now had more time for purposeful planning. Physical education is not just movement. It is the pedagogical process of learning about movement, and learning in movement. As physical educators prepare for the fall of 2020, regardless of the learning model, keep the “education” in the forefront of planning. Physical education standards, while inclusive of physical fitness, also address:

- fundamental motor movement skills and apply them to complex movement patterns utilized in multiple activities,
- application of knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics to movement and performance,
- responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others, and
- recognition of the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction.

## Minnesota Physical Education Requirements

School-based early childhood programs should have instruction aligned to the Minnesota Early Learning Indicators in [Physical and Movement Development](#).

K-12 schools are required to implement the [Minnesota 2010 Physical Education Standards](#), and develop their own grade-level benchmarks, curriculum and assessments to meet them. All students must receive instruction in physical education K-8 every year. High school students must receive instruction in physical education at least once. The amount of credit and graduation requirement is determined at the local level.

It’s important to note that K-12 physical education standards are changing. The [2018 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#) are to be fully implemented in all Minnesota school districts by the 2021-22 school year. Full implementation is defined as:

- By the 2021-22 school year, instruction in physical education in grades K-8 must include all the [2018 Minnesota Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#).
- Instruction at the high school level must include the [2018 Minnesota Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#) for grades 9-12 beginning with the 2021-22 freshman (ninth grade) class.
- All school districts are required to develop assessments to ensure students are meeting the benchmarks.

## Considerations for Physical Education in the Fall, 2020

[SHAPE America](#), in their document [SHAPE America 2020-2021 School Reentry Considerations: K-12 Physical Education, Health Education and Physical Activity](#), provides schools with recommendations and considerations for school reentry specific to K-12 physical education, health education and physical activity. Whether the

delivery method is in-school, distance learning or hybrid, physical educators should consider three distinct areas of focus when planning curricular units, assessments, and learning activities for students. They are (1) equity, inclusion and accessibility; (2) social emotional learning; and (3) a trauma-centered learning environment. Examples of each of these focus areas include:

### **Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility**

- Adapt learning expectations to meet the students' current conditions. By modifying programming, students of all physical abilities can participate in movement meaningfully.
- Consider students with 504 or Individual Educational Plans (IEP's) and make accommodations or modifications to meet their needs.
- When utilizing a distance learning or hybrid model, consider if there is equal access to the internet and a device at home to complete assignments.
- When utilizing a distance learning or hybrid model, consider if there is equal access to material and equipment at home to complete assignments.

### **Social Emotional Learning**

- Regardless of the environment, students may move, think, feel or act differently and may need time to relearn skills. Be patient with them. Students learn best when they feel confident and competent in fundamental movement skills.
- As much as possible, one-on-one communications with students provide a needed connection that fosters a sense of belonging.
- Encourage students to be active. Provide autonomy for activity selections.
- Integrate social emotional learning skills and competencies through all physical education programming. For information regarding social emotional competencies, see the Minnesota Department of Education's Social Emotional implementation Guide; or to see how social emotional competencies align with physical education standards, see the Crosswalk for SHAPE America National Standards & Grade-Level Outcomes.

### **Trauma-Centered Learning Environment**

- Get to know your student's pandemic experiences. Stress and trauma can inhibit learning. Meet students where they are and adapt accordingly. Appropriate movement selections can help relieve their stress.
- Provide opportunities to connect with your students and for students to connect with you such as office hours, chat times, and one-on-one check-ins.
- Create a predictable setting and routine doing such things as setting a regular class structure, and preparing students for potential upcoming changes with as much lead time as possible.
- Keep or create a chance for student voice providing opportunities for students to get involved with things such as class norms, ideas for routines or activities; and also provide many opportunities for them to give feedback.
- Implement [Restorative Practices](#) for issues that evolve to assist in mending relationships.
- Check with your students to see how they are and make adaptations if there are overwhelming feelings of anxiousness expressed through activities such as deep breathing exercises or calming music meditations.
- Regularly check-in with students regarding their needs and what they are doing for self-care.

For further information, [SHAPE America](#) released additional documents to help guide physical educators in the development of units, lessons, and learning experiences keeping equity, inclusion, and accessibility, social emotional learning, and a trauma-centered learning environment in the forefront. They are

- [SHAPE America 2020-2021 School Reentry Considerations: K-12 Physical Education, Health Education and Physical Activity Teacher Strategy Workbook](#)
- [SHAPE America 2020-2021 School Reentry Considerations: K-12 Physical Education, Health Education and Physical Activity At-Home Survey](#)

## School-wide Strategies

Ensuring school-wide policies for COVID-19 is essential for onsite physical education to occur. All health guidance provided by the [Minnesota State Learning Plan for 2020-21: A Localized, Data-Driven Approach](#) and the [MDH 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools](#) from the [Minnesota Department of Health](#) (MDH) as well as educational guidance from the [Minnesota Department of Education's 2020-21 Planning Guidance for Minnesota Public Schools](#) regarding COVID-19 should be followed. A school-wide COVID-19 coordinator or a team of individuals should be created to prepare and implement reentry plans. All staff should be properly trained in required safety protocols and on any new protocols recommended by the school. Staff should also proactively engage and communicate with students and families throughout the process of developing a plan for reentry. Ensure all stakeholders can provide feedback on the school reentry plan and can share safety or health concerns directed to the administration.

## Physical Education Instruction

A quality physical education program provides students with a planned, sequential, K-12 standards-based program of curricula and instruction designed to develop motor skills, knowledge and behaviors for active living, physical fitness, sportsmanship, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. Whether students are in the gym, at home, on a playground or in a field, the goal in physical education is to develop physically literate students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to be active for a lifetime. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has created a new educational challenge for physical educators to determine the most effective instructional strategies that can reach all students.

### Physical Education Instructional Strategies Relevant to all Scenarios

- Review the curriculum and ensure it is aligned with current [Minnesota 2010 Physical Education Standards](#) through this school year (2020-21) or the [2018 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#) that are to be fully implemented in all Minnesota school districts by the 2021-22 school year.
- When in-school, teachers should use a microphone and speaker when delivering instruction. The use of face coverings and the need to spread out students for physical distancing may make it difficult for teacher instructions to be heard.
- Balance learning options to include all four domains: physical, cognitive, affective and behavioral.
- Include more individual pursuits rather than traditional team activities such as dance and rhythms; outdoor pursuits such as orienteering or hiking; target games such as golf or bocce ball; or aquatics.

- Use games and activities that require no physical contact and do not require students to be in close proximity to each other.
- Include opportunities for student choice and incorporate student-suggested activities where appropriate.
- Explore with school administration the availability of funding around technology and program needs from the [CARES Act](#).
- Assess all state standards including both formative and summative assessment
- Determine how to best serve students with Individual Learning Plans.

## Considerations for In-School Physical Education Instruction

If a school district has determined it is safe and appropriate to reopen schools based on [MDH Guidance](#), many new protocols and precautions must be put in place to ensure the health and safety of school staff and students.

- While in-school, staff and students need to follow protocols to maintain physical distancing guidelines as much as possible.
- Teachers should be aware of the school plan for sanitation, how to implement the plan for sick students, and monitor patterns of illness.
- Consider ways to keep groups of students and staff static, so they remain in the same cohort as much as possible.
- Cancel or reschedule field trips, inter-group events, extracurricular activities based on local community COVID-19 guidelines.
- Allow students to participate to the best of their ability while wearing the clothes they wore to school.
  - Encourage students to wear comfortable clothing and safe footwear that allows for safe movement and is appropriate to the weather.
  - Plan alternative activities for students who are not wearing safe attire. The alternative activity must align with the same grade-level benchmarks that the rest of the class is working toward mastering that class period.

According to both the Minnesota departments of education and health guidance documents, physical education teachers should consider the following for in-school instruction regarding the physical environment, equipment safety, and sanitation:

### *Physical Environment*

- Evaluate available outdoor spaces on school property for physical education. When possible use outdoor spaces for instruction. When outdoors, avoid the use of playground equipment, benches or other permanent structures.
- Select a location for physical education instruction where students and staff can respect physical distancing guidelines.
- When inside, more space may be required due to increased respiration of students while participating in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. Special consideration should be given to this if there is a desire to increase class size for physical education instruction.
- If students are required to remain in the same classroom for all instructional periods throughout the school day, have physical education teachers rotate through classrooms to deliver instruction. Ensure teachers are familiar with the classrooms and spaces for instruction will be delivered so they can adjust their lessons and activities appropriately based on space available.

- If using the gymnasium or multipurpose room, keep the doors and windows open whenever possible, to maximize circulation and airflow to accommodate increased respiration by students during physical activity. Ensure the ventilation is working properly and confirm opening doors and windows is safe for students and staff in the school COVID-19 plan.
- Consider postponing or modifying units of instruction that take place in school weight rooms or swimming pools and consult with local community COVID-19 guidelines for the use of those types of facilities.
- Due to physical distancing, proper ventilation and sanitation requirements, consider not using locker rooms for physical education. Encourage students to wear comfortable clothing and safe footwear that allows for safe movement and is appropriate to the weather on days participating in physical education.
- Coordinate with classroom teachers and the school COVID-19 plan concerning transporting students from the classroom to the physical education space. Give students guidance on how to safely transition between classrooms while still maintaining physical distancing. Plan time to practice these transitions with students.
- Consult with school-wide COVID-19 plan from [MDH Guidance](#) on proper sanitation procedures for cleaning high touch surfaces in your facility (e.g., doorknobs, tables, handles). Ensure cleaners and disinfectants are stored properly and out of reach of students.
- Encourage students and staff to use individual water bottles.

### *Personal Hygiene*

- Ensure the availability of appropriate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (e.g., soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, disinfectant wipes and tissues) and strategically place them in areas frequently used. Have students and staff wash or sanitize hands as they enter and exit PE class. For more information see the MDH guidance for [Supplies for Schools: COVID-19](#).
- Teach students proper hand hygiene and incorporate into the regular class schedule. Use the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [CDC downloadable resources on handwashing](#) as visual cues and reminders.

### *Face Coverings*

- Follow the Minnesota Governor's [Executive Order 20-81](#) requiring face coverings in all indoor public spaces, including K-12 buildings. All students, staff, and other people present in school buildings and district offices, or riding on school transportation vehicles are required to wear a face covering.
- The [MDH 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools](#) from the [Minnesota Department of Health](#) identifies that "a face shield can be used as an alternative in the following situations:
  - Among students K-8 when wearing a face covering is problematic.
  - By teachers (all grades) when wearing a face covering may impeded in the educational process.
  - For staff, students or visitors who cannot tolerate a face covering due to a developmental, medical or behavioral condition.
  - For staff supporting student services, when face coverings impedes the service being provided".
- In reference to physical activity, the Minnesota Department of Health's [MDH 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools](#) states that "face coverings or face shields may be temporarily removed when engaging in indoor physical activity (e.g., during recess, after school sports, or when exercising in a gym) where the level of exertion makes wearing a face covering difficult, and during classes or activities held outdoors. People participating in these activities should maintain 6 feet of distance while doing so to the extent feasible".
- Use CDC guidance to teach students [how to wear and remove face coverings](#) and why they are important for protecting students and staff from the spread of COVID-19.

## *Equipment, Safety and Sanitation*

- Consult with the school-wide COVID-19 plan and [CDC guidance](#) on proper physical education equipment sanitation procedures.
- Inventory physical education equipment at the school to identify which pieces of equipment can be easily and effectively sanitized. Cloth or porous materials (such as yarn balls) are more difficult to properly sanitize than vinyl or plastic materials and should not be utilized.
- Limit use for physical education equipment and eliminate the use of equipment that would be passed between or shared by multiple students throughout a class period.
- For equipment that will be touched or handled by students, assign each student their own piece of equipment for that class period. Properly clean and disinfect equipment between classes. If there is not equitable equipment for all students or if equipment cannot be properly cleaned and disinfected between classes, avoid the use of equipment altogether.
- If using equipment, keep extra materials available in case a piece of equipment being used by a student becomes dirty or unsanitary during a lesson or activity.
- Equipment that will be touched or handled by students should be cleaned with soap and water and then disinfected with an United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) that is effective for COVID-19 and is safe for that piece of equipment (check manufacturer recommendations). Disinfectants should only be used on materials that students are not likely to put in their mouths.
- Identify staff who will be responsible for handling antimicrobial products (sterilizers, disinfectants, and sanitizers) and provide initial training so staff understand and follow all product label directions and precautions appearing on (or included within) product containers. Some disinfectants can irritate the lungs, skin, and eyes or trigger asthma. Ensure there is adequate ventilation when using these products by opening windows and doors to provide air flow.
- Encourage users or registered disinfectants and other cleaning products to always carefully read, understand and follow all product label directions appearing on (or included with) the containers. Statements such as “Keep out of the reach of children” means that students should not use the product or should not participate in cleaning or disinfecting routines. Securely store away from students.
- Keep student belongings in a separate, safe and clean space such as individually labeled cubbies, lockers and areas. Consider purchasing baskets to hold individual student belongings if previously mentioned spaces are not available.

For more information on cleaning and disinfecting go to:

- [CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Community Facilities](#)
- [CDC Reopening Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes](#)

## **Considerations for Distance Learning For Physical Education Instruction**

Distance learning can include online learning, as well as analogue (where there is no internet available). According to [SHAPE America](#), the specific considerations below are important to think about under a distance learning model for physical education:

- Develop strategies to connect with students so they feel like part of a school community and that they are cared for in order to learn.

- Assess the current curriculum to determine which units and lessons can be re-purposed as at-home or on-line work. Consider if students can participate safely and if adult supervision is required for the activity.
- Communicate clear learning expectations to parents, guardians, and students and convey the importance and relevance of what students will be learning. Be clear about where they can find their materials, how to submit their work, and what to do if there is a problem.
- Make sure expectations are realistic for students. Consider home dynamics.
- Re-communicate to students and parents. Don't just explain it once. Explain it every week.
- Reach out to students who are not engaging and figure out what their individual situation is and determine a solution together.
- Be patient and understanding. Not all students are in the same home situation. Be flexible. Understand that many factors contribute to success of distance learning and some of those factors may be out of your and your student's control.
- Create consistency in classroom routines and procedures. This creates familiarity for students.
- Provide opportunities for students to design, monitor, and evaluate their own physical activity preferences.
- Allow students to choose activities and describe how the selected activity impacts their flexibility, cardiovascular health, muscular strength and endurance.
- Include activities and assignments using technology when feasible.
- Balance screen time and activity time.
- Hold dedicated office hours so students can reach you, or schedule phone or other means of communication for student check-ins.
- Explore using parks or green spaces for outdoor learning and activities.
- Provide equipment if needed to meet an assignment.

For more information regarding online learning in physical education, see [SHAPE America Guidelines for Online Physical Education](#).

## Considerations for Hybrid Learning Physical Education Instruction

In hybrid learning, students attend school on a staggered schedule and participate in distance learning when not in school. When planning for the hybrid model, physical educators need to consider all the issues identified in the *in-school section* of this document as well as the *distance learning section*. In addition, the [Minnesota State Learning Plan for 2020-21: A Localized, Data-Driven Approach](#) requires social distancing in this learning model of at least 6 feet at all times in school buildings.

When implementing a hybrid learning model, [SHAPE America](#) suggests implementing a flipped classroom. A flipped classroom refers to a pedagogical approach in which the teacher assigns tasks to complete at home such as videos, audio recordings, worksheets, quizzes, student activity handouts, or textbook readings. Once completed at home, students arrive at school ready to put the knowledge they gained to practical use in the school environment. The flipped classroom approach is one way to shift the focus in classes from direct instructional delivery of information to guiding student acquisition of knowledge and skills while exploring content together. This approach can succeed in engaging parents and caregivers at home, showing them the potential benefits that physical education can bring into their lives. Other considerations include:

- Switching from providing direct instruction to a more student-centered, or project-based learning.
- Provide synchronous learning opportunities (distance learning that happens in real time) as much as possible, but record lessons to provide students who may not have access to real time.

- Allow for optimal student choice and provide opportunities for students to engage with teachers directly and often.

## Activities

Distance learning has challenged physical educators to think beyond the gymnasium or outdoor field setting to determine activities that can be done in the home, usually alone, with minimal space and equipment. While planning, physical educators are encouraged to revisit the *keep the “E” in physical education* section of this document. During the 2020-21 school year, schools in Minnesota may still be using the [Minnesota 2010 Physical Education Standards](#) in which the grade-level benchmarks, curriculum, activities and assessments are developed at the local level. It is left to the districts to determine the feasibility of implementation of their locally developed curriculum during distance learning. The [2018 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#) identify activity categories that physical educators are utilizing to assist them in their selections and are adapting for distance learning. They include:

- Aquatics
- Dance and rhythmic activities
- Fielding and striking games
- Fitness activities
- Individual performance activities
- Invasion games
- Net and wall games
- Outdoor pursuits
- Target games

It is important to note that during the 2020-21 school year, some activity categories may be difficult to do during a distance learning model. Physical educators are encouraged to utilize their professional judgement to determine feasibility of implementation.

## Assessment

There are many assessment tools available for gathering data on student knowledge and performance. Selecting the appropriate tool depends on the tool’s ability to provide evidence specific to the benchmarks and performance criteria. When selecting assessments, physical educators should remember the context of their teaching environment (i.e., available space, number of students, availability of equipment, learning environment (in school or distance learning)). SHAPE America suggests the following:

- Understand that assessment happens in many ways and can be assessment for learning or assessment of learning.
- Use backward planning to develop assessments.
- Provide a variety of assessments that address all the standards that are supposed to be covered.
- Offer opportunities for students to choose how they will demonstrate their knowledge and skills. This is a more equitable approach that set up students for success.

- Use formative assessments to determine concepts students understand and what students may be struggling with.
- Use simple rubrics so students understand how they will be assessed and what they will be assessed on.

To provide physical educators assistance in assessment, the Minnesota Department of Education has created elementary, middle school, and high school sample assessment documents. These documents allow teachers to measure performance and knowledge across all standards identified in the [2018 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards and Grade-Level Benchmarks](#). Teachers have the ability to select or modify assessments, or to build their own. The documents can be found here:

- [Elementary School \(grades K-5\) Physical Education Sample Assessments](#)
- [Middle School \(grades 6-8\) Physical Education Sample Assessments](#)
- [High School \(grades 9-12\) Physical Education Sample Assessments](#)

## Resources and References

### Minnesota Documents

[Minnesota Safe Learning Plan for 2020-21 A Localized, Data-Driven Approach](#), PDF, retrieved August 3, 2020 from the [Minnesota Safe Learning Plan webpage](#).

[Minnesota Department of Health 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools](#), PDF, retrieved September 3, 2020 from the [Minnesota Department of Health Covid-19 webpage](#).

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### National Documents

[CDC Consideration for Youth Sports](#), Retrieved July 20, 2020 from the [CDC COVID-19 Youth Sports webpage](#).

[CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Community Facilities](#), Retrieved July 20, 2020 from the [CDC Covid-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting webpage](#).

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