Physical Activity (PA) & Physical Education (PE)

2025–26 ANNUAL REPORT

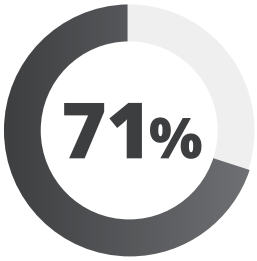
TN Department of Education | Coordinated School Health

Schools play a pivotal role in their capacity to support the development of lifelong habits of PA behaviors among their students. By developing and implementing PA policies and practices for students, schools can create environments supportive of the development of healthy American adults, while fostering student engagement and learning.

94%

public schools in compliance by integrating the required PA into the instructional school day

Types of Physical Activities Used to Meet the PA Requirement



71% of schools report using **classroom brain breaks**

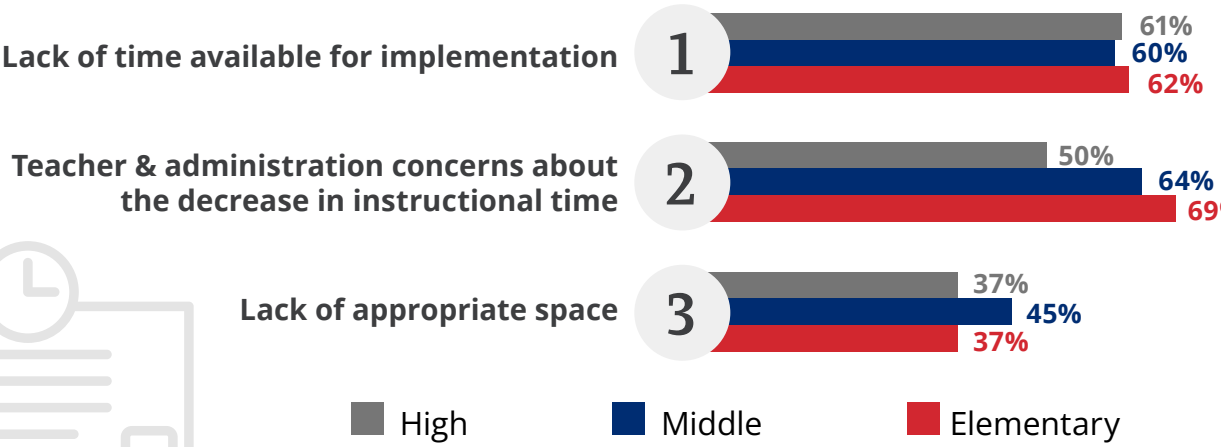
71% report using **recess**

Other methods: *walking breaks, Go Noodle, sensory pathways, action-based learning labs, PowerUp, The Walking Classroom, and curriculum support for classroom teachers and PE teachers*

TOTAL NUMBER OF:

- **781 Walking Tracks**
- **430 Student Fitness Rooms**
- **1,567 Playgrounds**

Top Reported Barriers to Compliance



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Innovative Methods that Schools Use to Comply with the PA Requirement

- Walking Trails & Tracks
- Weekly PA Logs
- Interactive Technology
- Intra-murals
- Walking & Running Clubs

FOR GRADUATION, TENNESSEE REQUIRES

0.5 HIGH SCHOOL CREDITS in PE

+1.0 CREDIT in a Lifetime Wellness course*

**This is a health education course with its own set of standards. It is not a PE class.*

Relevant Data or Studies Showing Whether Increased PA or PE Lead to Better Health Outcomes

LONG-TERM EFFECTS INCLUDE...

BENEFITS of regular PA	CONSEQUENCES of physical inactivity
Helps build and maintain healthy bones and muscles	Being overweight and obese, which are influenced by physical inactivity and poor diet and can increase one's risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, asthma, arthritis, and poor health status
Helps reduce the risk of developing obesity and chronic diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and colon cancer	Increased risk for premature death, death by heart disease, development of diabetes, colon cancer, and high blood pressure
Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety and promotes psychological health	

Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee (2018)

Researchers have been examining the association between PA and academic achievement for almost

50 YEARS

Findings conclude that PA has been shown to have a **significant positive association with students' cognitive functioning** ***(concentration and memory).***



Michael et al. (2015)

Compliance with the PA Requirement in School Districts with Average Daily Membership of 25,000 or More Students

75%

of urban districts are compliant for the 2025-26 school year.

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Summary & Recommendations

PA and PE requirements are in place to:

1. Support the physical and mental well-being of students through meaningful movement opportunities
2. Better prepare the brain and body to learn

40 MIN DAILY

Per Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1021, elementary school students in Tennessee must now have **AT LEAST 40 MINUTES OF PA DAILY** that includes unstructured outdoor play, among other changes. This is an increase from what was previously a 15-minute daily requirement.

Tennessee PE teachers stated:

2% **Teachers or administrators withheld PA as punishment.** Per Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1021(b)(2)(B) and State Board Policy 4.206, students may not be withheld from PA as punishment. The practice can inhibit the development of a positive attitude toward PA. In the case of PE specifically, the practice is withholding academic instruction.

20% **No grades are given for PE classes.** Reporting grades for PE is a best practice because it provides clear, actionable feedback to students and parents about learning progress, communicates the value of PE as an academic subject, and reinforces the development of physical literacy.

9% **They spend five hours or more of an instructional week being utilized in other ways than teaching PE, including but not limited to RTI2, assisting classroom teachers with academics, tutoring, lunch duty, and bus duty.** While additional responsibilities are frequently unavoidable, utilizing the instructional school day for the most-possible instructional time dedicated to an educator's content specialty for professionals like physical educators is a best practice. Positive outcome potential includes additional scheduling opportunities for students, reduced class sizes, and higher job satisfaction among educators.

71% **Tennessee physical educators do not use a published, planned sequential PE curriculum.** Districts are highly encouraged to use a written, clearly articulated plan for how physical education standards will be attained in the form of a curriculum. Both published and self-designed curricula should be reviewed using the CDC's Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (PECAT) for rigor, accuracy, and standards alignment.

53% **Tennessee high schools offer electives in PE beyond the minimum graduation requirement, *including but not limited to Kinesiology, Sports Officiating, Lifetime Sports, and Strength and Conditioning.*** By giving structured choices that cater to diverse student interests, students are empowered to take ownership of their wellness, increase overall PA levels, and be more engaged.

37% **Their schools have PA clubs.** A physically active school culture that encourages students to be engaged and connected with each other in the instructional school day is a best practice as part of a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Pro (CSPAP).

87% **On average, their students are moderately-to-vigorously active at least 50% of class time.** This is a best practice for PE instruction.

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This report details compliance with Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1021.

References

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