
PHYSICAL EDUCATION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



SCHOOL REOPENING TOOLKIT: PHYSICAL EDUCATION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

All information in the document is non-regulatory guidance issued for general informational purposes only. This document is not intended to constitute legal advice. Because local school board policy and unique facts make dramatic differences in analyzing any situation, the Tennessee Department of Education advises each school district to consult with the local school board attorney for specific legal advice regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school operations.

Physical education classes and programs at all grade levels may be impacted by extended school closures, transitions to alternative instructional delivery formats, and the procedural changes necessary to maintain student and staff health when re-entering buildings again. While social distancing and the potential transition to non-traditional and alternative instructional delivery formats present several unique and unseen challenges, engagement and activities in physical education beyond general physical activity can and should continue.

Keeping students active and moving is a healthy way to stimulate their brains and their bodies. Regular physical activity has been shown to improve memory and cognitive functions, boost focus, decrease stress and anxiety, and positively affect overall mood. Even with current social distancing recommendations, keeping active remains important for our overall health and immune systems. Physical education supports safe, developmentally appropriate activities and gives students the confidence and skill to remain active on their own.

The purpose of this document is to help teachers, school administrators, and district leaders think through opportunities to support the safety, health and growth of all students through physical education during the school re-entry process in response to COVID-19. This document also outlines important considerations for ongoing learning and engagement during potential extended closures, as well as planning for sustainability and continuity of physical education programs.

District leaders are encouraged to share this guidance with school administrators and physical educators.

I. Considerations and Best Practices

General Considerations

- SHAPE America's "[School Reentry considerations: K-12 Physical Education, Health Education, and Physical Activity](#)" includes overarching strategies for schools to consider for reentry as well as considerations for these models of learning:
 - In-school instruction with physical distancing
 - Physical Education
 - Health Education
 - Recess
 - Classroom-based physical activity
 - Distance Learning
 - Physical Education
 - Health Education
 - Hybrid Learning
 - Physical Education
 - Health Education
 - See other COVID-19 resources to support HPE [here](#).
- Activities in physical education should be modified to avoid participant contact.
- Although student movement within the building will likely be limited or modified, it is most

appropriate to move classes to the gymnasium for safe and effective instruction.

- To maintain the effectiveness of the instructional program and student safety, maximum class sizes in physical education should match that already in local policy for regular classroom teaching positions.
- In some situations, it may not be possible to address all physical education grade-level standards due to the constraints of social distancing.

Considerations for In-School Physical Education

- Classes should not be combined, and class size should not be increased for physical education instruction. Classes should be conducted outdoors whenever possible. More space for instruction may be required for physical education class to allow for physical distancing that must be maintained during times of increased respiration as a result of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.
- Physical education teachers may benefit from teaching with a microphone for personal health and safety, as projecting the voice increases the transmission of the virus. A wireless microphone or personal-wear projection device would be most appropriate to allow the teacher to circulate and maintain a presence through the entire learning space.
- Advise students to come to school dressed in clothes that are appropriate for participation in physical education, whether indoors or outdoors. It is recommended that schools eliminate the use of locker rooms and the requirement that students must change into a physical education uniform for participation in physical education.
- Schools should make their own determination of what qualifies as appropriate footwear for student safety in physical education. Consider a no-laces/no-tying rule for younger grades to decrease contact frequency and close proximity.
- Plan to incorporate marked off areas (e.g., poly spots, cones, visual aids, signs) to ensure physical distancing among students and reduce cross contamination of equipment. Clean and disinfect all equipment between class periods.
- When equipment must be shared, it should be shared within a small cohort of students and be cleaned and disinfected before being used by another cohort or class. If enough equipment is available, teachers may swap used equipment out for clean equipment in order to reduce cleaning time during class.
- Clean and disinfect water bottle filling stations regularly and consider closing water fountains.
- Coordinate with classroom teachers and the school-wide COVID-19 response team on a plan for transporting students from the classroom to the physical education space (e.g., gymnasium, outdoors, multipurpose room). Give students guidance on how to safely transition between classrooms while still maintaining physical distancing. Plan time to practice these transitions with students.
- Ensure all students and staff wash their hands after participating in physical education class.
- [More considerations](#) for in-school physical education.

Considerations for Adapted Physical Education

- District and school leaders along with physical educators should refer to a student's IEP for guidance on their specific needs to engage in physical education instruction.
- Distance learning may change what it means to have the least restrictive environment for students. District and school leaders should consider technology or modified equipment supports in the home for these students where applicable.
- Questions to consider for [equity, inclusion and accessibility](#) for physical education and physical activity are available [here](#).
- Some adapted physical education resources to support instruction include:
 - [I Can Do It! Program](#)
 - [Fitbound](#)
 - [Fit 5](#)
 - [Camp Abilities](#)
- Additional guidance and resources for special populations are available on the [Tennessee Department of Education Website](#).

Considerations for Recess

- Provide recess or free time to engage in safe physical activity daily for all K-12 students whenever possible. Recess should provide opportunities for all students to be active and allow for free choice by students.
- Evaluate available indoor and outdoor spaces on school property that can be used for recess. Identify multiple areas where recess can be held for different cohorts of students to minimize crowding. Whenever possible, use outdoor spaces for recess.
- Have students and staff wash or sanitize hands before and after recess. Use CDC downloadable resources on [handwashing](#) as visual cues and reminders.
- Significantly limit or eliminate the use of playground equipment or play structures. If playground equipment must be used, it requires normal, routine cleaning. Targeted cleaning and disinfection should be conducted with throughout the day for high-touch surfaces like railings. Consult with the school-wide COVID-19 response team and [CDC guidance](#) on playground and recess play equipment cleaning and disinfection procedures.
- Use painted play spaces or create play areas with stencils or cones to designate zones to help students identify how to safely comply with physical distancing guidelines and to provide sufficient opportunities for free choice during recess.
- Encourage recess games and activities that do not require physical contact or for students to be in close physical proximity with each other.
- Ensure all students and staff wash their hands after returning from recess.
- [More considerations](#) for recess.

Considerations for Classroom Physical Activity

- If deemed safe by school administrators, open the doors and windows to the classroom to maximize circulation and air flow.

- [Springboard to Active Schools](#) provides schools with key resources to easily implement strategies for classroom physical activity.
- Physical educators can support core content educators and physical activity best practices by providing samples of activities that integrate movement with academic standards from other content areas.
- A sample of quality movement-based learning resources are:
 - [The Walking Classroom](#)
 - [Jack Hartmann Kids Music Channel](#)
 - [PowerUp Fitness](#)
 - [Active Academics](#)
 - [GoNoodle](#)
 - [Walkabouts](#)
 - [Math and Movement](#)
 - [Cosmic Kids Yoga](#)

Considerations for Hybrid and Distance Learning Physical Education and Physical Activity

- Educators should design skill practice and activities to allow for student choice of where, when, and how to be physically active.
- Instructional strategies promoting independent learning with a balance of screen time and physical activity times is the most appropriate practice.
- In situations where online access is limited, students should have access to alternative resources and activities to prioritize engagement in learning rather than strict alignment and instruction in the standards.
- Not all students and families have access to devices or reliable internet service. Consider alternative activities for those who may not be able to access virtual lessons or resources. For example, [OPEN Active Home](#) includes printable task cards, weekly content packets by grade level, journaling pages, activity calendars, and physical activity logs.
- Consider a variety of non-traditional content delivery methods, including live-streamed and recorded video instruction, as well as printed activity packets or supplements for learners.
- Be mindful of the limits of online/distance learning platforms and the attention span of young learners.
 - Daily virtual engagements with all learners and class cohorts may not be possible.
 - The frequency and duration of instruction, tasks, and activities may need modification in order to be effective.
 - Designing a series or suite of activities to engage learners in purposeful movement experiences may be more effective than transitioning daily classroom instruction and work for non-traditional delivery.
- Consider offering opportunities to explore physical education standards and concepts through writing. For example, students can write in response to experiencing a new activity, current events in the professional sport industry, or interview a family member about their favorite game type to participate in (net/wall, target, invasion, or striking/fielding), etc. A sample of writing and reflection prompts are included below in the Instruction and Learning Strategies section.

- Consider activities that support strong connections with other content areas to make activities and tasks enriching and meaningful.
- Physical educators can support core content educators and physical activity best practices by providing samples of activities that integrate movement with academic standards from other content areas.

II. Instruction and Learning Suggestions for In-School, Hybrid, or Extended Distance Learning

Physical Education Lessons and Activities

- OPEN’s [Curriculum Mapping Project](#) and [PE NOW modules](#) include teacher planning tools for developing a standards-based approach for planning how to enter the first 10- weeks of school depending on the type of instructional scenario.
- [health. moves. minds.](#) inspires healthy habits, fuels active minds, and teaches kids to thrive physically and emotionally. The program offers resources for HPE teachers to integrate into instruction, and can be utilized for in-person, hybrid, and full-virtual instructional scenarios.
- A sample from SHAPE America’s K-12 Physical Education In-School Instruction with Physical Distancing Supplement for grades 3-5 is shown here. Find similar supports for other grade levels in the document [Appendix](#).

| National Standards for K-12 Physical Education | Example Grade-Level Outcomes | Example Activity Ideas/Strategies |
|--|---|---|
| 1 (motor skills and movement patterns) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S1. E1-E5 Locomotor • S1. E7 Balance • S1. E13 Underhand throw • S1. E16 Catching • S1. E17 Dribbling with hands • S1. E18 Dribbling with feet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tossing and target games • Striking activities (e.g., racquets, paddles) • Creative movement • Movement stories, teachers read a story as students act it out • Kicking |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| 3 (health-enhancing fitness) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> S3. E3 Fitness knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate strategies for self-regulation (Try these Skills Posters for Grades K-5) Create a class list of activities students can do outside of school Dance Stretching, Yoga Track and field Fitness stations Agility ladder activities Scavenger hunts |
| 4 (responsible personal and social behavior) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> S4. E4 Working with others S4. E5 Rules and etiquette | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate opportunities for students to provide feedback/praise within activities Have students explain the importance of the new routines & rules Have students suggest classroom norms and contribute to class decisions Walk & Talk activities that provide opportunities to practice respectful/active listening (scenario ideas, pp. 8-11) |
| 5 (value of physical activity) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> S5. E2 Challenge S5. E3 self-expression and enjoyment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate check-ins into the daily routine (Try using the Emoji Rating Scale) Have students rate the difficulty of new activities Have students rate activities for enjoyment Provide opportunities for reflection and discussion around the benefits of physical activity especially related to improving mood Self-reflection assignments/assessments |

Post-Psychomotor Reflection Questions

These questions may be helpful for use as digital discussion or writing prompts to reinforce all five of the academic standards components in the cognitive and affective domains.

- What did you think? Choose all that apply, then explain your answer.
 - This was fun!
 - Not for me.
 - I would do (insert activity) again.
 - It was challenging.
- How did you feel before, during and after (activity)? Things to consider in your answer are determining if you found it difficult to be in the present moment or why you were feeling a

certain emotion.

- Do you feel a (activity) is something you would do regularly? Why or why not.
- Compare (activity) to (activity). List out the pros and cons of each one. Which one did you like better? Which one do you see yourself using more often? Be sure to explain the reasons why or why not.
- Now that the week is over, how are you feeling? What was the best part of your week? What was something that could have been better?

Secondary Level Writing Prompts

- Topics should be modified to be appropriate for the audience, the length of the required response, the style of writing, and the availability of credible sources. A sample of current events based in sport, technology, or ethics:
 - Current events
 - Nike Vaporfly Saga: 2016 Olympics to today
 - Houston Astros sign stealing scandal
 - Olympics 2021: Athlete training schedules, event clashes, and other problems with rescheduling
 - Gender pay differences in sport
 - Sports as a unifying force - specific examples analyzing before/during/after cultural climate shifts
 - Common divisive issues in sport – Students can argue for or against either by choice or assignment.
 - NBA/NFL shouldn't make college a requirement
 - Professionals bailing before shaking hands
 - MLB steroid era players shouldn't be excluded from the Hall of Fame
 - The continued existence of designated hitters (and the potential for the NL to adopt them this season)
 - College athletes should be compensated beyond scholarships
 - Athlete obligation to engage the media
 - Running up the score is ok

Best Practices Spotlight During Spring Closure:

In Sumner County Schools, Jackie Campbell included self-demonstration videos in her PE Google classroom. Molly Bargery posted her “What’s Up, Coach” instructional and motivational videos to the H.B. Williams Facebook page. Ellis Middle School utilized their school Instagram account to share weekly challenge videos. The image featured is a push-up challenge, demonstrating proper form.



In East Tennessee, Monroe County Schools maintained their physical activity program Monroe in Motion through Zoom, advertising the activity of the day through their Coordinated School Health Facebook page. Students shared photos of themselves with the group to keep each other motivated.



Bradley County Schools utilized free resources like GoNoodle and OPEN to share activities easily done with no equipment, or equipment found at home like sock balls, laundry baskets, and towels.



All reopening guidance from the Department can be found [here](#). For questions regarding COVID-19 guidance on physical education or physical activity, or for more information about physical education programs in Tennessee schools, call (615) 557-6075 or email Heather.M.Piergies@tn.gov.