

The Healthy Kids Act

In an effort to increase students' capacity for learning, improve academic performance, and provide numerous health benefits, the Healthy Kids Act of 2008 established physical activity requirements for Iowa students in kindergarten through Grade 12, as well as nutritional content standards for food and beverages sold or provided on school grounds during the school day. Physical activity requirements went into effect in July of 2009 and nutritional content standards in July of 2010.

Physical Activity Requirements

K – Grade 5

- Students of K–5th Grade are required to have a minimum of 30 minutes of physical activity each school day.
- Recess can count toward the requirement. There is no mandate requiring specific activities during recess, though schools are urged to have recess supervisors that encourage students to participate in appropriate physical activity.

Grades 6 – 12

- Students of grades 6–12 are required to have a minimum of 120 minutes of physical activity per week.
- A week is defined as having five school days.
- The requirement must be met each week, and may not be averaged over the month, year, or semester.

Physical Education versus Physical Activity

Physical activity is not synonymous with physical education. All instructors of all disciplines are encouraged to incorporate physical activity into their classrooms. Schools should not need to add more physical education teachers to meet the requirements of the Healthy Kids Act.

Waivers

Students not physically able to fulfill the physical activity requirement may be excused from the requirement by school administrators. Determining who is physically able is left to the judgment of local school officials. Students can also be excused from the physical activity requirement if the student's parent or guardian files a written statement stating that the requirement conflicts with the student's religious belief.

Keeping Track

Grades K-5 can build a schedule demonstrating the times allowed for recess and PE, as can higher elementary schools as long as a physical activity time is clearly shown.

For students in grades 9-12, non-school activities can help fulfill the requirement and do not have to be adult supervised, but should include physical activity such as an individualized exercise plan. Some schools have utilized physical activity contracts to help track out-of-school activity.

Information provided by the Iowa Department of Education. For full text of the Healthy Kids Act and further detail, visit www.tinyurl.com/Iowa-HKA.