

Position Statement

Schools Should Provide Before- and After-School Physical Activity And Intramural Sport Programs

Position

It is SHAPE America's position that:

1. School-based physical activity programs should be provided and promoted for all students before and after school; and
2. School-based intramural sport programs should be provided and promoted for all students in grades 3-12 before and after school.

The purpose of this document is to provide physical education teachers, directors of physical activity, school administrators and program leaders with basic information for planning and implementing high-quality before- and after-school physical activity and intramural sport programming for children in grades K-12.

Guiding Principles

All children in grades K-12 should receive basic instruction in motor skills, health-related fitness and sport activities through comprehensive, high-quality physical education programs.

SHAPE America's position is that such programs facilitate the skills and knowledge necessary for supporting an active, productive and healthy lifestyle, and SHAPE America recommends the following guiding principles:

- Intramural and other before- and after-school physical activity programs complement high-quality physical education in ensuring that all children are provided the opportunity — regardless of fitness level and athletic skills — to participate in physical activity that can contribute to their enjoyment of sports and other lifetime physical activity.
- Every school should provide a comprehensive school physical activity program with high-quality physical education as the foundation so that children and youths will develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to be physically active for a lifetime. School administrators must ask: "Are we providing all students with high-quality and

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sustainable opportunities to be physically active from the moment they walk in the door to the moment they leave the building?”

- Students must be encouraged to be part of the decision-making process to establish a variety of physical activity programs and intramural sports to be offered.
- Schools must ensure that:
 - Students receive at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity as part of their daily physical activity requirement.
 - Healthy food choices are available and promoted.
 - Additional educational material that promotes a healthy lifestyle (e.g., reduced screen time) is available.

Survey Results

In a 2011 survey, SHAPE America found that:

- Fewer than one-sixth of the schools surveyed — 16 percent of elementary schools, 13 percent of middle schools and 6 percent of high schools — provided a comprehensive school physical activity program (CSPAP).
- Almost two-thirds of the schools (63 percent) offered physical activity clubs and/or intramural sports.
- In 55 percent of the schools surveyed, at least 25 percent of the male student population participated in a minimum of one physical activity club or intramural sport, compared to 49 percent of schools in which females met this same criterion.
- From middle school to high school, though, SHAPE America found a big drop in the percentage of schools in which more than one-fourth of their student population participated in at least one physical activity club or intramural sport: 62 percent of middle schools met that criterion for males, but only 50 percent of high schools did; and 53 percent of middle schools met that criterion for females, but only 40 percent of high schools did.
- Interscholastic sports were provided most commonly in high schools (89 percent) and least frequently provided in elementary schools (14 percent). In 70 percent of the high schools surveyed, at least 25 percent of males participated in one or more interscholastic sports, and 58 percent of high schools met that criterion for female participation.
- Almost two-thirds (65 percent) of the high schools surveyed restricted interscholastic sports participation by implementing “cut policies.”

Characteristics of Before- and After-School PA & Intramural Programs

The term “intramural” means simply “within the walls.” Traditionally, the term refers to team and dual/individual activities, tournaments, meets and/or special events that are limited to participants and teams from within a school or institutional setting. More recently, efforts to expand intramural participation have broadened the definition to include all physical activity-based programming, including clubs, open gym days, dance activities, etc.

In addition to within-school participation, here are four distinguishing characteristics of an intramural after-school physical activity program:

1. The program meets the school’s CSPAP criteria.
2. Activities are intended to be voluntary in nature (i.e., the student has a choice of activities or participation).
3. Every student is provided an equal opportunity to participate, regardless of physical ability or skill level.
4. Students have opportunities to involve themselves in the planning, organization, administration and evaluation of programs. Such involvement should be age-appropriate and should be under the supervision and guidance of a qualified adult.

Goals for Before- and After-School PA and Intramural Programs

SHAPE America recommends that schools set the following goals for creating and maintaining a before- or after-school physical activity program or an intramural sport program:

- Establish a student-centered program that considers the needs and interests of all students, including students with disabilities.
- Provide opportunities for students to experience a variety of physical activities and intramural sports that will contribute to an active lifestyle and enhance their leisure-time physical activity.
- Apply SHAPE America’s National Standards for Sport Coaches to program design and implementation.
- Promote moderate to vigorous physical activity.
- Provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for students that will promote and enhance motor skill development and self-efficacy.
- Provide opportunities to participate in sports and physical activities without regard for performance skill or ability.

- Provide activities in a safe and professionally supervised environment.
- Include health-related fitness education and skill development as part of the intramural program.
- Promote enjoyment, fair play and teamwork.
- Enhance social interaction and reduce student conflict.
- Provide opportunities for co-ed physical activity participation, when appropriate, but also focus on the behavioral, social and psychological needs of both genders, their disposition toward physical activity and intramural sport participation, and solutions to promote enhanced engagement in physical activity and intramural sports for all students.

Intramural/PA Program Organization & Administration

SHAPE America offers the following guidelines for organizing and administering before- and after-school physical activity and intramural sport programs:

- Schools should *not* substitute before- and after-school physical activity opportunities for part of the physical education program.
- Intramural programming does not replace a physical education curriculum, but provides a forum for enhanced learning and refinement of skills and behaviors that are promoted in physical education classes. In addition, an intramurals program (e.g., lacrosse) can introduce components of physical education that might not be offered as part of the physical education curriculum because of inadequate expertise and/or equipment.
- Intramurals should:
 - Be directed by professional educators.
 - Have access to adequate facilities and equipment.
 - Ensure participants' safety.
 - Be funded adequately.
- Students should be grouped during activities based on interest and developmentally appropriate activities, and then be adjusted for skill and maturity level.
- Opportunities to partner with high-quality before- and after-school programs that do not include a physical activity component can enhance both programs and provide a more comprehensive after-school program. Many before- and after-school programs (e.g., tutoring, mentoring) require a physical activity component to enhance their program objectives.

- Children and adolescents should never be left unattended. Schools should maintain the following appropriate-staff-to-student ratios at all times:
 - Kindergarten: 1:10.
 - Grades 1 through 3: 1:12.
 - Grades 4 through 12: 1:15.
 - When two or more children are present in the program, at least two staff members should be present.
 - Ratios may be lower when staff members are working with special-needs students.
 - When children are grouped in mixed-age levels, the lowest ratio — 1:10 — for school-age students should apply.
 - With activities that carry a higher level of risk (e.g., ice skating, martial arts), the lowest staff/student ratio — 1:10 — should apply. Additional adults should be present on field trips and other outings that are difficult to supervise.

Professional Leadership

SHAPE America recommends that schools require before- and after-school activities directors to be certified by SHAPE America as directors of physical activity.

Competencies for a director of physical activity include:

- Knowledge and understanding of SHAPE America's National Standards for Sport Coaches.
- Understanding of cognitive, psychosocial and motor development in children and youths.
- Knowledge of and sequential progressions for components of physical fitness and appropriate training principles.
- Knowledge of a variety of sports and physical activities, including skills, rules and officiating techniques.
- Knowledge of sports safety requirements and first aid.
- Knowledge of program planning and various resources available for providing appropriate physical activity experiences.
- Knowledge of and skills related to organizing competition (e.g., teams, ladders, tournaments, practices, rotations).

- Ability to collaborate with community, families and partner organizations to provide continuum of athletic and physical activity opportunities.

Activities

SHAPE America recommends the following guidelines for activities offered in before- and after-school physical activity programs:

- Activities should reflect student interests and should provide challenge, enjoyment and moderate to vigorous physical activity for all participants.
- The program of activities should include competitions in various sports, clubs, self-directed activities, open gym, special events, and instructional and practice opportunities
- Consider modifying activities so that they are appropriate for individual students' age, physical development and skill levels. Leagues may need to be established based on low, moderate and high skill levels.
- Establish rules and regulations that ensure equal opportunity, fair play and safe participation.

Facilities & Equipment

Adequate facilities and equipment are critical to supporting the success of physical activity programs. Not only should schools modify programs to meet the budget and space available, but they should modify equipment according to participants' age, size and/or physical ability.

SHAPE America recommends the following guidelines for facilities and equipment used to support before- and after-school physical activity and intramural sport programs:

- Schools should ensure that facilities are adequate for meeting the needs, interests and number of students participating.
- Activity directors should research safety standards for each activity in the program and ensure that they are met. That includes conducting regular inspections and removing, repairing or discarding all damaged equipment.
- The amount of equipment depends on the programs offered, but it should meet the needs of participants so that the programs can serve the maximum number of participants under established safety standards.

Participants' Health & Safety

So that intramural physical activity programs will enhance participants' health and fitness, SHAPE America recommends the following guidelines:

- All activities should be structured to ensure that safety requirements are met, including consideration of each participant's readiness for the activity based on age, skill and physical condition.
- Schools should develop a before- and after-school physical activity policy manual that includes the following:
 - All participants should have medical clearance to participate. Medical problems that can affect participation should be communicated to the program leader. Medical clearance should be reaffirmed on a periodic basis.
 - Parents must provide informed consent.
 - Locker rooms should be supervised, with clear rules for student behavior.
 - Written policies must be available that outline procedures for preventing accidents, managing injury situations, reporting accidents and notifying parents/guardians in the event of an emergency.
 - Immediate first aid must be available from trained providers any time the program is in progress. First aid equipment must be available on site, must be included in the budget for the program and must be monitored regularly.
- Pupil/teacher ratios must match the ratios established for classroom subjects.
- Students must be supervised appropriately at all times.

Evaluation

Intramural programming must include both ongoing evaluation throughout the school year and final evaluation near the end of the school year. Areas to be reviewed include:

- Whether program objectives were set and met.
- Whether program goals were met.
- Whether the programming meets the CSPAP criteria.
- Whether student response to the activities meets the goals set for the program.

Specifically:

- Did students' levels of enjoyment of physical activity increase?
- Did students' levels of fitness and skill development improve?
- Did students sign up to continue the program?

- Whether facilities/equipment meets the program's needs.
- Whether participants' safety was maintained throughout the program.
- Whether the program helps to meet other identified objectives of the school, such as academic performance, attendance and behavior.

The results of the evaluation process allow for modification of objectives, planning and implementation of program needs, justification for budgets, and program changes.

Position Statement Task Force

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Companion Documents From SHAPE America

- [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: Helping All Students Log 60 Minutes of Physical Activity Each Day](#)
- [The Essential Components of Physical Education](#)
- *National Standards for Sport Coaches (2nd Ed.): Quality Coaches, Quality Sports* (2006)