

The Department of Public Instruction receives many questions regarding instruction-related issues, including those about physical education. The following are answers to frequently asked questions related to physical education. For more information on these issues, please contact: Sally Jones Physical Education, Health Education and Coordinated School Health Consultant, 608-267-9234 or sally.jones@dpi.wi.gov.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The American Academy of Pediatrics recommend students should get 60 minutes of physical activity a day. Additionally, this activity, including Physical Education, is linked to improved academic performance.

1. How many times per week must school districts provide physical education in grades K-6?

School districts must provide physical education three times weekly for students in grades K – 6, except for days on which special activities occur (Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 8.01, School district standards, (2) (j) and (k)). The physical education class should reflect a typical class period, which for most elementary classes is about 30 minutes. Instruction must be provided weekly throughout the school year (Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 8.01, (2) (L)). Students in grade 5 in a middle school format must have physical education three times a week throughout the school year and students in grades 6 may be scheduled the same as students in grades 7 – 12 if they attend a school that has any of those grades (Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 8.01, (2) (j)).

2. Can some elementary physical education classes be taught by a classroom teacher?

Yes, Standard J states that elementary (K-6) physical education must be taught by or under the direction of a certified physical educator (Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 8.01, School district standards, (2) (j) and (k)). This permits school districts to provide some elementary physical education lessons by a classroom teacher. It is important to provide suitable lesson plans to help the classroom teachers implement quality physical education activities.

3. Can recess/active classrooms/before or after school activity be substituted for a required elementary physical education class?

No, recess and activity outside of physical education is not considered sequential, comprehensive, and developmental as required in Wisconsin Administrative Code PI 8.01. As such it may not be substituted for required physical education period as part of a course of instruction.

4. How many times per week must school districts provide physical education in grades 7-8?

Instruction must be provided weekly throughout the school year and meet a K-12 sequential curriculum plan including assessment. (Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 8.01, (2) (L)).

5. Can physical education in grades 7-12 be taught by teachers without a physical education license?

No, school districts' physical education courses in grades 7-12 must be taught by a certified physical educator (Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 8.01 (2) (j) and (k)).

6. Can a student who has just completed eighth grade earn high school credit for summer school courses taken prior to the start of the ninth grade academic year?

Yes, in some cases. The school district must determine the student's grade level for coursework taken in summer school. The course may be credited to the grade level the student will attend beginning September 1 or it may be credited to the grade level the student attended in the prior academic year for remedial or working to complete the requirements to exit eighth grade.

7. Can a high school student earn credit toward graduation during summer school?

Yes. For most subject areas there are no state-imposed limits on the number of credits that may be earned in a subject area in an academic year. The exception is in physical education, where the school must monitor the requirement that only one-half credit per year may count toward the 1.5 credits required in physical education for high school graduation. A student earning one-half credit in physical education in summer school may take additional physical education courses as electives during the following academic year; however, the maximum that may count toward the high school graduation requirement in any given year is one-half credit. Students must be involved in physical education for three out of the four high school years, except in special individual circumstances.

8. Can a student make-up a shortage of physical education credit during summer school?

Yes, the school may provide physical education courses in the summer if the student is deficient in physical education credit, partial or full credit may be completed in summer school. If a student fails a physical education course in the regular academic year, the student may take a physical education course in summer school to earn the one-half credit for that just-completed academic year and still earn an additional one-half credit in the ensuing academic year, as the summer school course is counting for the prior year. (Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 8.01 (2) (j) and (k)).

9. May a high school student earn all of their PE credits toward graduation during summer school?

Yes, the school district may provide a summer school courses that reflects the goals and objectives of their physical education curriculum. (Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 8.01 (2) (j) and (k)).

10. Can schools provide opportunities to get physical education credits before or after school?

Yes, there is nothing in state law prohibiting a school district from offering a physical education course before the normal school day begins or during after-school periods. (Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 8.01, School district standards, (2) (j) and (k)).

11. Can school districts waive the requirement for physical education credit (e.g., doctor's medical excuse for an extensive period of time)?

There is no statutory means for waiving the physical education credit requirement for graduation. Every school must establish an alternative learning experience (e.g. a written assignment, an adapted program) when the student is unable to participate in a formal physical education class.

12. Under what conditions students may be permitted to complete their 1 ½ credit graduation requirement in less than three years? (e.g., transfer, extended medical removal)

The school district may address this issue on a case by case basis applying the curriculum modification statute (Wisconsin Statute 118.15 Compulsory School Attendance). PI 8 requires that the 1 1/2 credit be earned over three years, but there may be extenuating circumstances that warrant modification by the school district.

13. May districts provide the entire 1 ½ credits required in physical education through online programs?

Yes, the school district may include in their curriculum that a student can achieve the physical education requirement in online courses that meet all applicable statutory and administrative rule requirements including Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter PI 8.01, (2) (j) and (k).

14. Under what conditions can a non-senior student earn two physical education credits in a single school year even though their curriculum spells out that it should be taken over the course of three years?

The school district can address this issue on a case by case basis applying the curriculum modification statute (Wisconsin Statute 118.15 Compulsory School Attendance).

15. Where can one find answers to questions related to adapted PE programs?

<https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/laws-procedures-bulletins/bulletins/10-04>

