

Health and Physical Education

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Minnesota requires public schools to provide health education, but standards and curriculum are determined at the local level, not at the state level. Physical education standards are set at the state level.

Are public schools required to provide health education?

Minnesota requires public schools to provide students health education instruction, but does not have statewide health education standards. In other academic areas, such as math or language arts, Minnesota has statewide standards and benchmarks that determine what students learn in each grade. In health education, however, standards are set at the local level, meaning school districts and charter schools individually determine what content to teach, how to teach it, and what assessments to use. The Department of Education recommends, but does not require, that districts use the National Health Education Standards. The department also provides sample grade-specific benchmarks for kindergarten through grade 10 health education. Schools must periodically review their health education standards and benchmarks.

In addition, school districts must provide instruction on the following topics:

- onetime cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automatic external defibrillator instruction as part of the curriculum for students in grades 7 through 12; and
- vaping prevention instruction at least once to students in grades 6 through 8.

Students enrolled in nonpublic or homeschools must also receive instruction in health and physical education.

Are public schools required to provide physical education?

Students must meet statewide physical education standards. Minnesota has adopted the standards and benchmarks for kindergarten through grade 12 from the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE). Districts must develop physical education assessments, though the Department of Education has sample assessments aligned to the state standards that districts may use instead of district-developed assessments.

A student may be excused from physical education class if:

- the student submits information from a physician stating that physical activity will jeopardize the student's health;
- the student has an individualized education program, federal 504 plan, or individualized health plan indicating that being excused meets the child's unique and individualized needs; or
- a parent or guardian requests an exemption on religious grounds.

Schools must provide modifications or adaptations to students with disabilities, to allow physical education class to meet their individual needs.

Are public schools required to provide mental health instruction?

State law encourages but does not require school districts and charter schools to provide mental health instruction for students in grades 4 to 12. The commissioner of education must make mental health instruction resources gathered by mental health advocates available to districts and charter schools. Resources must include age-appropriate model learning activities and a directory of resources for planning and implementing age-appropriate mental health curriculum and instruction. Instruction on preventing suicide or self-harm must use either the resources provided by the commissioner or other evidence-based instruction.

Are public schools required to provide sex education?

School districts must have a program to prevent and reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections and diseases, including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). Program requirements are listed in [Minnesota Statutes, section 121A.23](#). The commissioner of education, in consultation with the commissioner of health, must help districts develop these programs. If a district does not develop and implement a program to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infection and disease, the Department of Education must help the service cooperative in the region that serves the district to develop or implement a program. The Department of Education may also help nonpublic schools develop their own programs.

State law encourages schools to provide students instruction on child sexual abuse prevention. Districts may include child sexual abuse prevention instruction in a health curriculum.

Can parents review health education instructional materials used in schools?

All instructional materials are subject to the parental curriculum review requirements in [Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.20](#). This statute requires school districts to have a procedure for parents to review the contents of instructional materials provided to minors, and if the parent objects to the content, to make reasonable arrangements with the school for alternative instruction.

What professional requirements apply to health education teachers?

A teacher providing health education instruction in a public school must comply with the teacher licensing requirements in [Minnesota Statutes, chapter 122A](#), and [Minnesota Rules, chapter 8710](#). The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board's administrative rule 8710.4500 sets forth requirements specific to health teachers.

