

It's Time to Prioritize Health & Physical Education

Students' well-being depends on it.

The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the need for schools to consider students' physical, mental, and social-emotional health above all else. And, an important part of the solution must be health and physical education.

Health & PE is where students learn:

- Critical **social-emotional skills** to help manage emotions and handle daily tasks and challenges;
- Important **character values** such as resilience, fairness, respect, equality, and inclusion;
- Fundamental **motor skills** needed to participate in physical activity, which is vital at all ages and stages of life.



STUDENTS NEED SUPPORT

For years, rates of anxiety and depression among children and adolescents have been rising rapidly — and COVID-19 has made this mental health crisis worse.

In addition, many students have experienced a level of trauma during the pandemic that can be categorized as an adverse childhood experience (ACE), which — without intervention — can result in chronic disease and lifelong mental health issues.

Students need trusted adults to help them deal with these challenges, and health and physical educators can play an important role. They teach students age-appropriate skills to develop the mind-body connection, which can improve mental health and overall wellness.

STUDENTS NEED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Health and physical educators are on the front lines of the social and emotional learning (SEL) movement — teaching students the skills and behaviors that will help them succeed in all areas of life. This includes managing emotions, setting goals, and building positive relationships.

These skills are embedded within the SEL framework — and in the National Standards that health and physical education teachers use daily.

STUDENTS NEED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity has many benefits for students, such as decreasing stress, preventing chronic disease, and increasing academic performance.

Physical education is an academic, skills-based class taught by a certified teacher — with lessons based on SHAPE America's National Standards & Grade-Level Outcomes for K-12 Physical Education.

Students need both physical education *and* physical activity to learn and apply skills. The connection between the teacher and student is critical.



“It is also critical to maintain a balanced curriculum with continued physical education ... rather than an exclusive emphasis on core subject areas.”

American Academy of Pediatrics (2020).
COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance
for School Re-entry.

