

Teaching Physical Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic



Educators are working on creating safe and supportive learning environments to provide students with opportunities to learn new skills and concepts. There are many factors to consider when planning for [high-quality standards-based physical education](#) instruction in your local school system and/or school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Below is a synopsis of the [layered prevention strategies](#) needed to protect students/children, teachers, and staff. Regardless of the scenario, the central focus for all physical education programs will remain the [standards and grade-level outcomes](#) and teachers are expected to continue to take a [trauma-informed approach](#), focus on [social and emotional learning](#), and use instructional strategies with an [equitable, diverse, and inclusive lens](#).

Face Coverings:

Use of cloth face coverings in physical education is required when engaged in indoor low-to-moderate physical activity. If students are exercising (moderate-to-vigorous physical activity) in a well-ventilated area, face masks are not required and students must be able to maintain a physical distance of six feet.

- Only low-to-moderate physical activities should take place indoors when wearing a face covering.
- For safety, face coverings should be removed if students are participating in vigorous physical activities; these activities should only occur outdoors and when students can remain physically distant—six or more feet apart.
- Teachers and staff should be trained to monitor students for distress during physical activity when wearing face coverings.
- If masks are to be removed they should be [stored somewhere safe](#) to keep it clean such as a dry pocket, purse, or paper bag. Make sure to wash or sanitize your hands after removing your mask. After exercising, the mask must be put back on with the same side facing out. Be sure to wash or sanitize your hands again after putting your mask back on. If the face covering is wet it should be kept in a sealed plastic bag until it can be washed.

Instructional Spaces:

Students and staff should remain physically distant (three or more feet apart) during all learning activities and when transitioning to and from class when wearing a mask. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least three feet it is especially important to layer prevention strategies. Students and staff must remain physically distant (six or more feet apart) when exercising and not wearing a mask.

- Take your students outside if you have a large, safe space, and weather conditions permit.
- If you cannot go outside, utilize your space as you normally would. However, if your facility has the capability, consider opening windows and doors, using fans, and other methods to increase the circulation of air as much as possible. Do not open windows and/or doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., if it would expose occupants to exhaust fumes) to people using the facility.
- Use wet-erase floor markers, floor tape, field paint, and/or chalk to visually identify physical distancing.

Equipment Use:

Physical education equipment may be utilized if local metrics allow and protocols have been established.

- Students should wash and/or sanitize their hands before and after class.
- Equipment must be [cleaned and disinfected](#).

Instructional Resources:

- Maryland State Department of Education: [Physical Education](#)
- SHAPE America: [COVID-19 Resources for Health and Physical Education](#)
- PHE Canada: [2021 Back to School Resources](#)
- CDC: [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools – Recess and Physical Education](#)