



National Association for  
Sport and Physical Education  
an association of the American Alliance for Health,  
Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

**NASPE Sets the Standard**



American Heart Association | American Stroke Association  
*Learn and Live...*

## PRESS RELEASE

For more information, contact:

Paula Keyes Kun, NASPE, (703) 476-3461; pkun@aahperd.org

Kanika M. Lewis, American Heart Association, (202) 785-7935; kanika.lewis@heart.org

### Shape of the Nation Report

#### STATES SEVERELY LACKING KEY PHYSICAL EDUCATION MANDATES THAT CAN HELP ADDRESS THE CHILDHOOD OBESITY EPIDEMIC

RESTON, VA, June 2, 2010 – The *2010 Shape of the Nation Report: Status of Physical Education in the USA* released today from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) and the American Heart Association (AHA), shows that while the majority of states mandate physical education, there are two significant inadequacies relative to time requirements and exemptions/waivers. Given the recent increased attention on childhood obesity prevention initiatives, legislators and school policy-makers can and should be part of the solution by correcting these inadequacies in physical education policies.

The report, which surveyed physical education coordinators in all 50 state education agencies and the District of Columbia, provides a current picture of physical education in the American public education system. NASPE and AHA recommend that schools provide 150 minutes per week/30 minutes per day of instructional physical education for elementary school children, and 225 minutes per week/45 minutes per day for middle and high school students for the entire school year. Only one state (Alabama) aligns with these nationally recommended guidelines at all levels.

The good news is that the majority of states mandate that students must take physical education (43 states for elementary, 40 states for middle, and 46 states for high school). However, a major loophole exists in over half of all states. Thirty-two states permit school districts or schools to allow students to substitute other activities for their required physical education credit. Thirty states allow schools or school districts to grant exemptions/waivers for physical education. Other key findings include:

- Only five states (Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Mexico and Vermont) require physical education in every grade level.
- Forty-eight states (92%) have their own state standards for physical education, but only 34 states (67%) require local districts to comply or align with these standards.
- Only 19 states (37%) require some form of student assessment in physical education.

- Forty-three percent of states (22) allow required physical education credits to be earned through online physical education courses.
- Fewer states (14 vs. 22 in 2006) require physical education grades to be included in students' grade point averages.
- Thirteen states (25%) require schools to measure Body Mass Index (BMI) and/or height and weight for each student.

According to NASPE President Lynn Couturier, chair of the Physical Education Department, State University of New York at Cortland, "One of our main concerns is that more than half of states (32) are now permitting waivers and/or exemptions for students from taking physical education. This means that these students are graduating without the benefits of being physically educated, having the knowledge, competence and skills they need to be physically active adults."

"With only one state meeting nationally recommended minutes for physical education, our kids face an uphill battle to becoming more physically active," said Nancy Brown, American Heart Association CEO. "We must do more to reverse this trend by urging states and local school districts to step up their requirements to improve the quality of their physical education programs to impact children's health and boost their academic performance."

Conducted every five years, the *Shape of the Nation Report* seeks to track our success, as a nation, in physically educating children to help ensure that physical activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Physical education is a planned instructional program with specific objectives. An essential part of the total curriculum, quality physical education programs increase physical competence, physical activity participation, health-related fitness, self-responsibility, and enjoyment of physical activity so that students will participate in physical activity as a natural part of everyday life. The report provides information from each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia in the following areas: time requirements; exemptions/waivers and substitutions; class size; standards, curriculum and instruction; student assessment; physical education teacher certification/licensure; National Board Certification in physical education; state physical education coordinator requirements; and BMI collection. For the complete report visit: [www.naspeinfo.org/shapeofthenation](http://www.naspeinfo.org/shapeofthenation).

### **Recommendations for Action**

NASPE and AHA remind the nation that physically active, healthy kids learn better. School age youth need at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity every day. NASPE and AHA recommend that schools across the country make physical education instruction the

cornerstone of a comprehensive school physical activity program that also includes health education, elementary school recess, after-school physical activity clubs and intramurals, high school interscholastic athletics, walk/bike-to-school programs and staff wellness programs. Additionally, all schools should follow the national standards and guidelines for K-12 physical education ([www.naspeinfo.org](http://www.naspeinfo.org)) and should be held accountable for the quality of their physical education programs. “NASPE’s Let’s Move in School initiative, developed to support First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move campaign, seeks to ensure that every school provides opportunities for quality physical education and physical activity in order to educate youth about all of the benefits of a physically active lifestyle. Supportive state and local policy is a first step in creating physically active school environments and physically educated students.” For more information, visit [www.LetsMoveInSchool.org](http://www.LetsMoveInSchool.org).

### **NASPE**

The preeminent national authority on physical education and a recognized leader in sport and physical activity, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) is a non-profit professional membership association that sets the standard for practice in physical education and sport. NASPE’s 15,000 members include: K-12 physical education teachers, coaches, administrators, researchers, and college/university faculty who prepare professionals in these areas. NASPE seeks to enhance knowledge, improve professional practice, and increase support for high-quality physical education, sport and physical activity programs. It is the largest of the five national associations that make up the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance (AAHPERD). For more information, visit [www.naspeinfo.org](http://www.naspeinfo.org).

### **American Heart Association**

Founded in 1924, we’re the nation’s oldest and largest voluntary health organization dedicated to building healthier lives, free of heart disease and stroke. To help prevent, treat and defeat these diseases — America’s No. 1 and No. 3 killers — we fund cutting-edge research, conduct lifesaving public and professional educational programs, and advocate to protect public health. To learn more or join us in helping all Americans, call 1-800-AHA-USA1 or visit [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org).