

POLICY 11:

School Health and Nutrition

Why School Health and Nutrition Policy Matters. States seeking to promote healthy communities and brighter futures for children can do so by enhancing health education and nutrition in schools. Research shows that investments in school health education can improve health outcomes for children and teenagers.⁵⁷

Key State Policy Measures. States seeking to promote healthy communities can do so through policies that include the following:

11.1 Physical education requirements. States can enact policies requiring physical education (PE) programs in public elementary and secondary schools to help reduce and prevent obesity. Some states require PE during high school only, equaling one to three years of coursework. Other states require PE for four to nine years (typically in kindergarten through grades five or six with some secondary school requirements). Still others require ten years or more of PE (typically in grades K-8 with some high school requirements) and of those, some allow students to substitute a non-exercise oriented class in place of PE.

Changes in 2007: None

11.2 Nutritional standards for foods sold on school campuses. States can promote good health among youth through nutritional standards that prohibit the sale of high fat and high sugar foods at school. At a minimum, all states must comply with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) standards for subsidized meal programs. Some states take an extra step of limiting the sale of foods with minimal nutritional value until the last lunch period is over. Still others set nutritional standards for all foods available in school.

Changes in 2006-07:

- Delaware, Indiana, and Rhode Island increased limits on non-nutritional food.
- Nevada, Oregon, and Texas set nutritional standards for all foods available in school.

11.3 Sexual-health education. Comprehensive sexual-health education programs promote abstinence as the most effective means of preventing sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and pregnancy, and also provide medically accurate information about contraceptive use.⁵⁸ Studies show that teenagers who received comprehensive sexual-health education were both more knowledgeable about the consequences of risky behaviors and less likely to be engaged in them.⁵⁹ Some states require public schools to provide both sexual-health education and STD/HIV education, whereas others require only the latter. Still others offer courses on these topics, but do not make attendance mandatory.

Changes in 2006:

- Oregon began requiring that public schools provide general sexual-health education.

School Health and Nutrition Policy Measures

Measure 11.1: Physical Education Requirements

How many years of physical education does the state require in elementary and secondary school? *Table reflects policy as of 2007.*

More than 10 years with no substitutions	Mo., Mont., N.Y., Tenn.
More than 10 years with substitutions permitted	Ala., Ark., Calif., Ga., Ill., Iowa, Ky., Maine, Md., Mass., Neb., N.H., N.M., N.C., N.D., Pa., Texas, Utah, Va., Wash.
4 to 9 years (typically K-5 or K-6 with some secondary school requirements)	Del., Fla., Kan., La., Okla., R.I., S.C., W.Va., Wyo.
Some high school only (1 to 3 years)	Alaska, Conn.*, Hawaii, Ind., Minn.*, Miss., Nev., Ore., S.D., Vt.*, Wis.
No specific grades are mandated	Ariz.*, Colo., Idaho*, Mich.*, N.J.*, Ohio

* Ariz., Conn., Idaho, Mich., Minn., N.J., and Vt. mandate physical education as a general part of the state curriculum, but fail to specify any grades beyond limited high school graduation requirements.

Measure 11.2: Nutritional Standards for Food Sold on School Campuses

What methods does the state require to promote healthy eating in public schools? *Table reflects policy as of 2007.*

Sets nutritional standards for all foods sold in school	Ariz., Calif., Hawaii, Ky., La., Maine, Nev., N.J., N.C., Okla., Ore., S.C., Tenn., Texas, Va., W.Va.
Limits sale of low nutrition food until the last lunch period is over	Ala., Ark., Colo., Conn., Del., Fla., Ga., Ill., Ind., Md., Miss., Neb., N.M., N.Y., R.I.
Complies with basic USDA standards only	Alaska, D.C., Idaho, Iowa, Kan., Mass., Mich., Minn., Mo., Mont., N.H., N.D., Ohio, Pa., S.D., Utah, Vt., Wash., Wis., Wyo.

Measure 11.3: Sexual-Health Education

What type of sexual-health education courses are required by the state in public schools? *Table reflects policy as of 2007.*

Both sexual-health and HIV/STD education	Del., D.C., Fla., Ga., Hawaii, Iowa, Kan., Ky., Maine, Md., Minn., Mont., Nev., N.J., N.C., Ore., R.I., S.C., Tenn., Utah, Vt.
HIV/STD education only	Ala., Calif., Conn., Ind., Mich., Mo., N.H., N.M., N.Y., Ohio, Okla., Pa., Wash., Wis., W.Va.
No course requirements	Alaska, Ariz., Ark., Colo., Idaho, Ill., La., Mass., Miss., Neb., N.D., S.D., Texas, Va., Wyo.

Selected State School Health and Nutrition Policies

STATE	11.1			11.2		11.3
	PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE) REQUIREMENTS			NUTRITIONAL MEASURES BEYOND USDA COMPLIANCE		SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS
	Years of PE Required	PE Substitutions Prohibited	Specific Grades With Mandated PE		General Sexual Health	HIV/STD Only
Alabama	10 or more	Yes	K-8, 1 HS*	Limits Non-nutritional Food	-	Yes
Alaska	1	Yes	1 HS	USDA Only	-	-
Arizona	Not Specified	-	Grades Not Specified	Nutrition Standards for All Food	-	-
Arkansas	10 or more	-	K-8, 1 HS	Limits Non-nutritional Food	-	-
California	10 or more	-	K-8, 2 HS	Nutrition Standards for All Food	-	Yes
Colorado	0	-	None	Limits Non-nutritional Food	-	-
Connecticut	1	-	1 HS	Limits Non-nutritional Food	-	Yes
Delaware	9	-	1-8, 1 HS	↑ Limits Non-nutritional Food	Yes	Yes
District of Columbia	Not Included	Not Studied	Not included	USDA Only	Yes	Yes
Florida	7	-	K-5, 1 HS	Limits Non-nutritional Food	Yes	Yes
Georgia	10 or more	-	K-8, 1 HS	Limits Non-nutritional Food	Yes	Yes
Hawaii	1	-	1 HS	Nutrition Standards for All Food	Yes	Yes
Idaho	Not Specified	-	Grades Not Specified	USDA Only	-	-
Illinois	10 or more	-	K-12	Limits Non-nutritional Food	-	-
Indiana	1	Yes	1 HS	↑ Limits Non-nutritional Food	-	Yes
Iowa	10 or more	-	K-8, 1 HS	USDA Only	Yes	Yes
Kansas	8	Yes	K-6, 1 HS	USDA Only	Yes	Yes
Kentucky	10 or more	-	K-8, 1 HS	Nutrition Standards for All Food	Yes	Yes
Louisiana	9	-	K-6, 2 HS	Nutrition Standards for All Food	-	-
Maine	10 or more	-	K-8, 2 HS	Nutrition Standards for All Food	Yes	Yes
Maryland	10 or more	-	K-12	Limits Non-nutritional Food	Yes	Yes
Massachusetts	10 or more	-	K-12	USDA Only	-	-
Michigan	Not Specified	-	Grades Not Specified	USDA Only	-	Yes
Minnesota	3	Yes	3 HS	USDA Only	Yes	Yes
Mississippi	1	-	1 HS	Limits Non-nutritional Food	-	-
Missouri	10 or more	Yes	K-8, 1 HS	USDA Only	-	Yes
Montana	10 or more	Yes	K-8, 1 HS	USDA Only	Yes	Yes
Nebraska	10 or more	-	K-8, 2 HS	Limits Non-nutritional Food	-	-
Nevada	2	-	2 HS [a]	↑ Nutrition Standards for All Food	Yes	Yes
New Hampshire	10 or more	-	K-8, 1 HS	USDA Only	-	Yes
New Jersey	Not Specified	-	Grades Not Specified	Nutrition Standards for All Food	Yes	Yes
New Mexico	10 or more	-	K-8, 1 HS	Limits Non-nutritional Food	-	Yes
New York	10 or more	Yes	K-8, 2 HS	Limits Non-nutritional Food	-	Yes
North Carolina	10 or more	-	K-8, 1 HS	Nutrition Standards for All Food	Yes	Yes
North Dakota	10 or more	-	K-8, 1 HS	USDA Only	-	-
Ohio	0	Yes	None	USDA Only	-	Yes
Oklahoma	6	Yes	K-5	Nutrition Standards for All Food	-	Yes
Oregon	1	-	1 HS	↑ Nutrition Standards for All Food	↑ Yes	Yes
Pennsylvania	10 or more	-	K-8, 1 HS	USDA Only [b]	-	Yes
Rhode Island	9	-	K-8	↑ Limits Non-nutritional Food	Yes	Yes
South Carolina	7	-	K-5, 1 HS	Nutrition Standards for All Food	Yes	Yes
South Dakota	0	-	1 HS [b]	USDA Only	-	-
Tennessee	10 or more	Yes	K-8, 1 HS	Nutrition Standards for All Food	Yes	Yes
Texas	10 or more	-	K-8, 1 HS	↑ Nutrition Standards for All Food	-	-
Utah	10 or more	-	K-6, 7 or 8, 2 HS	USDA Only	Yes	Yes
Vermont	1	-	1 HS	USDA Only	Yes	Yes
Virginia	10 or more	-	K-8, 2 HS	Nutrition Standards for All Food	-	-
Washington	10 or more	-	1-8, 2 HS	USDA Only [a]	-	Yes
West Virginia	8	Yes	K-5, 6,7,or 8, 1 HS	Nutrition Standards for All Food	-	Yes
Wisconsin	1	-	1 HS	USDA Only	-	Yes
Wyoming	9	-	K-8	USDA Only	-	-
Year Data Collected	2007			2006		2007

*HS = The number of years of PE required in high school for graduation.

Data Source:

- 11.1** National Association of State Boards of Education. "State-by-State Physical Education." *The Safe and Healthy Schools Project Online Database*. Updated continuously. Retrieved December 2007. <http://www.nasbe.org/HealthySchools>.
- 11.2** Center for Science in the Public Interest, *School Foods Report Card 2007*, Washington, DC: Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2007.
- 11.3** Alan Guttmacher Institute. "Sex and STD/HIV Education." *State Policies in Brief*. Updated December 1, 2007. <http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs>

Data Table Notes:

- a. Washington will enact nutrition standards for all food by 2010.
- b. Pennsylvania provides a financial incentive for schools who implement nutrition standards established by the state for competitive foods.