



The West Virginia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (WVAHPERD) is our state's premier professional organization for serving health and physical educators. In this season of pandemic uncertainties and social unrest, we believe that our expertise can be of great assistance in designing re-entry to school plans whether it be physically in the schools, virtual classes, or a blend of these methods.

"Physical, Social-Emotional, and Mental Health and Wellness" is a priority area of the *WV Outbreak to Recovery Plan*. We feel that in order to reach this goal, the physical component must be included. As we are all aware from research and data, that physical education and physical activity boost academic achievement. Physical education and physical activity also promote disease prevention, boost immunity, prevent complications of Covid 19, reduce stress, mitigate adverse childhood experiences and trauma through social and emotional learning, develop personal fitness, empower students in social situations and develop leadership skills. Physical educators are on the front lines of the social and emotional learning movement. This is outlined in the West Virginia SEL crosswalk document. Many of West Virginia Wellness standards directly aligned with SEL from the collaborative for academic, social and emotional learning framework. As we all know West Virginia already suffers from sedentary lifestyles with only 26% of secondary students getting the recommended physical activity needed for good health. Many West Virginia students live in poverty, have limited access and opportunity for physical activity even before Covid-19. Since the pandemic, their already limited access has only gotten worse. Many of the existing opportunities such as playgrounds, YMCA, and sports activities have been closed or cancelled. Schools may be one of the few places that children can develop large muscle movement and creative play. In order to exercise safely they need quality physical education, physical activity opportunities and recess as well as a safe environment. Physical education needs to be provided by certified instructors because we have been trained in safety and social/emotional issues as well as pedagogy for physical development.

Additionally, a standards-based, sequential and developmentally appropriate health and physical education program that provides opportunities for health and physical literacy serves to support not only the wellness of our students but to introduce and reinforce foundational outcomes in the areas of social-emotional learning, equity and inclusion. A few objectives in our

health and physical education program that many do not know are associated with our content include: the lifelong skills of relationship-building, decision-making, self-advocacy, kindness, mindfulness, communication and teamwork.

Physical education differs from physical activity. Physical activity is any movement with our body and can be done through everyday activities such as coming and going to school as well as in classrooms where we encourage movement and stretching brain boosts. Recess is physical activity whether it is structured or free play. After all this time that our society has been staying home, one of the most important things we can do for our students is to give them time for physical activity.

Physical education is a structured comprehensive curriculum which teaches and refines skills, scaffolds learning, increases physical literacy, adapts and modifies lessons for individual students including those with IEPs and 504s, develops not only team skills and knowledge but also individual skills, safety procedures, personal hygiene and wellness. Physical education needs to be maintained as a priority for student health and wellness. Though PE teachers are all willing to pitch in for the good of the cause and help wherever we are needed as we re-enter schools, children need and deserve to continue with their physical education. Students need their routine of having their physical education teacher as a positive adult role model and a trusted adult. Students will already be transitioning to new grades and new classroom teachers, new routines which would possibly include masks and social distancing, and these new routines can cause mounting stress. The familiar face of a trusted physical education teacher can provide stability and stress relief as students access the new normal of our school systems.

Though physical education classes can be taught outside when weather permits and space is available (provided the area is safe and dry), this should not be a long-term solution for physical education classes. We all know that West Virginia weather changes quickly with much rain, cold and humidity affecting outside classes. Physical education could temporarily be held in a classroom though this is not a long-term solution either as it limits moderate to vigorous movement which is necessary for improving fitness and disease prevention and reducing stress. As schools are reaching and brainstorming ideas for this school term, please keep Physical Education a priority and its classroom, which is the gymnasium, available for Physical Education classes. I would also like to encourage you to keep WVAHPERD in mind as a top resource in this field. Our website is [wvahperd.org](http://wvahperd.org). Our parent organization is the Society for Health and Physical Educators of America (SHAPEAMERICA) with a website link of [shapeamerica.org](http://shapeamerica.org). Shape America has released 2020 - 2021 school re-entry considerations for K through 12 physical education, health education and physical activity. These considerations align with the CDC's guidelines for re-entry to schools. WVAHPERD would like to encourage West Virginia to adopt these guidelines as well. [\*SHAPE America's 2020-2021 School Reentry Considerations: K-12 Physical Education, Health Education, and Physical Activity\*](#)

It is our hope that we can be of assistance to teachers, schools, administrators and even the WV Department of Education. We would like an opportunity for a seat at the table in order to

have input into quality health and physical education for the 2020-2021 school term as well as for future educational issues and to help best meet the needs of our students.

WVAHPERD advances our profession, provides staff development training in our field, offers opportunities for graduate credit, shares trending activities and strategies, offers a platform for discussing current issues with like minded professionals, encourages networking, and presents access to national leaders in our field. We have been highly trained in safety and social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL has been our priority for several years even before the recent pandemic and equality issues of today. We promote topics such as kindness, mindfulness and empowerment to be taught in schools.

Thank you for taking the time to review this document and its attachments. If you have any questions please reach out to us, we would be happy to give insight from the field.

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