Physical Fitness and Physical Activity FAQ

Introduction

House File 2676 (HF2676), signed into law on May 20, 2026, included Division IX adding physical fitness assessment to the physical education curriculum and Division X amending the physical activity requirements of the Iowa Healthy Kids Act. The following frequently asked questions (FAQ) are related to the physical fitness and physical activity requirements for Iowa public schools and accredited nonpublic schools.

Physical Fitness Assessment

1. **Does fitness testing need to take place in each grade or within each grade band?**
    - Physical education (PE) curriculum requirements for grades 1-6, 7-8 and 9-12 will include an assessment of the physical fitness of students who are physically able using the Presidential Physical Fitness test at least once during each grade band 1-6, 7-8 and 9-12.
2. **How often does the fitness testing need to take place?**
    - Fitness testing needs to take place at least once in each grade band. It is a local decision as to what time of the year (fall/spring) and how often students participate in fitness tests.
3. **Do teachers need to follow certain protocols for fitness testing?**
    - Protocols for fitness testing are locally determined within the Presidential Physical Fitness guidelines.
4. **Who and how is 'physically able' determined?**
    - 'Physically able' is locally determined. The determination of whether a student is physically able to participate is made by the local school based on the student's individual circumstances, including any applicable medical information, IEP, Section 504 Plan or other relevant documentation.
    - Students with disabilities must have access to educational curriculum with or without modifications or accommodations.
5. **Who is tracking participation in the Presidential Fitness Test?**
    - Participation tracking protocols are locally determined.
6. **Who is responsible for providing certificates to students who meet fitness levels?**
    - Certificates for those who meet the Presidential Physical Fitness Test levels are provided locally.
7. **What federal resources and support are available?**
    - Presidential Physical Fitness Test benchmarks and downloadable certificates.

8. **What state resources and supports are available?**

    - In addition to the Letter to the Field and these FAQs, please see the following webpages:
        - Healthy Kids Act
        - Physical Education Instruction
        - School Wellness

9. **Are there best-practices that should be followed for administering fitness testing?**

    - Schools are encouraged to follow the administration guidance provided by the Presidential Physical Fitness Test program and implement testing in a manner that promotes student safety, privacy and positive encouragement.

10. **Do parents need to consent to fitness testing that is a part of the PE curriculum?**

    - No. Advanced parent consent is not necessary for participation in PE, including the Presidential Physical Fitness Test. Note that parents and guardians may request excusals (withdraw consent) for physical education instruction, which would also include the Presidential Physical Fitness Test.

11. **Do students who are exempt from PE need to participate in fitness testing?**

    - Fitness testing is a requirement of the PE curriculum. An eligible exemption from PE also exempts students from fitness testing.

12. **When does the fitness testing requirement go into effect?**

    - The requirement for fitness testing in PE is in effect for the 2026-2027 school year.

Physical Activity

13. **To what grades do physical activity requirements apply?**

    - Physical activity requirements apply to grades K-12, and do not apply to preschool.

14. **How many minutes of physical activity must schools provide?**

    - At least forty minutes of physical activity per day is required for grades kindergarten through fourth grade
    - At least thirty minutes of physical activity per day is required for grade five.
    - At least once hundred and twenty minutes per week of physical activity is required for grades six through twelve.

15. **What counts toward the physical activity requirement?**

    - Physical activity is any movement, manipulation or exertion of the body that can lead to improved levels of physical fitness and quality of life. A school district or accredited nonpublic school shall not reduce instructional time for academic courses in order to meet the physical activity requirements.
    - Active movement during PE, recess, between classes and during class count toward the physical activity requirement. School may offer physical activity contracts to students in grades six through twelve who meet the one hundred and twenty minutes per week of physical activity through participation in athletic or extracurricular activities.

16. **Do “brain breaks” or other classroom-based activities count toward the physical activity requirement?**

    - Yes. “Brain breaks” and other classroom-based physical movements that employ meaningful physical activity may count toward the requirement?

17. **May students be excused from the physical activity requirement?**

    - Yes. Students may be excused from the physical activity requirement if the child’s parent or guardian files a written statement with the school stating that the physical activity requirement conflicts with their child’s religious belief. As with other “religious belief” exemptions, the school is not to demand proof of the statement.

18. **What if the student is physically unable to fulfill the physical activity requirement?**

    - While every effort should be made to provide physical activity for students of all abilities, students may be excused by the school administrator if they are physically unable to fulfill the physical activity requirement. Determining who is physically able is left to the judgment of local school officials.

    - State and schools are required to provide equal opportunity to participate in PE by children and youth with and without disabilities.

19. **Is “physical activity” synonymous with “physical education”?**

    - No. While activity within physical education (PE) does count toward physical activity minutes, physical activity throughout the school day does not count toward PE requirements. PE includes required content and standards and is led by an appropriately licensed and endorsed teacher. Physical activity is any movement, manipulation or exertion of the body that can lead to improved levels of physical fitness and quality of life.

20. **How do school keep track of student physical activity?**

    - Schools and school districts must provide documentation that pupils are being provided with the support to complete the physical activity requirement. This documentation may be provided through schedules, district policies, student handbooks and similar means. School may also enact physical activity contracts for grades 6-12 allowing students to demonstrate how they are meeting the physical activity requirement beyond the school day.

Physical Activity for grades six through twelve

21. **Can a school refuse to graduate a student who has not met the physical activity requirement?**

    - No. The physical activity requirement is an accreditation requirement, not a student-specific graduation requirement. Schools are to monitor this requirement, and failure to substantially monito would be an accreditation violation.

22. **Can a school use the average of 120 minutes per week of physical activity?**

    - No. The 120 minutes is required per “week” of school as determined by the schedule adopted by the local school/district.

23. **Does a school with a four-day week need to meet the 120 minutes per week of the physical activity requirement?**

    - Yes. An approved four-day week does not change the weekly physical activity requirements, just as other statutory or accreditation requirements are not modified for a four-day school week.

24. **May a school refuse to allow non-school based activities to count toward the physical activity requirement?**

    - Yes. Schools may set limits on their local physical activity contract, but schools may not require students to participate in interscholastic sports or other school activities in order to meet the physical activity requirement.

25. **If a student has a physical activity contract, does that also count toward physical education (PE) credit, excusal or exemption?**

    - No. Physical activity contracts do not constitute PE credit or excusals. PE credit must meet the teaching and learning standards to earn credit. PE excusals must be individually requested in writing and meet the individual excusal or exemption requirement.

Resources

- Healthy Kids Act
- Physical Education Instruction
- School Wellness