

2014 Georgia Middle and High School Physical Activity Data Summary

Background

Physical activity prevents chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers.¹ In addition, being physically active improves mental health, reduces anxiety and depression and enhances academic performance.² Current national guidelines recommend that children and adolescents participate in 60 minutes or more of physical activity daily.³ Schools can improve fitness habits and overall health by implementing policies and practices that promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles for a lifetime.² One way to ensure that students receive well-rounded physical activity experiences is for schools to develop, implement and evaluate their own multi-component approaches, also known as a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP).⁴

Data Description

The School Health Profiles (SHP) is a biennial survey of middle and high school principals and lead health educators (LHEs) in representative middle and high schools in Georgia. SHP monitors the status of school health education, physical education and school health policies related to HIV/AIDS, tobacco use prevention, nutrition, asthma management activities and family and community involvement in school health.

For the 2014 SHP survey, questionnaires were sent to 392 regular public schools, charter schools and alternative schools containing any of grades 6 through 12 during spring 2014. Survey questionnaires were received from principals in 77 percent of schools and from LHEs in 72 percent of schools. Because the response rate was greater than 70 percent, the results were weighted and are considered representative of all public schools in Georgia including charter, alternative and traditional schools comprising at least one of grades 6 through 12.

Overview of Physical Activity Policies and Practices

SHP survey data shows that among Georgia's middle and high schools:

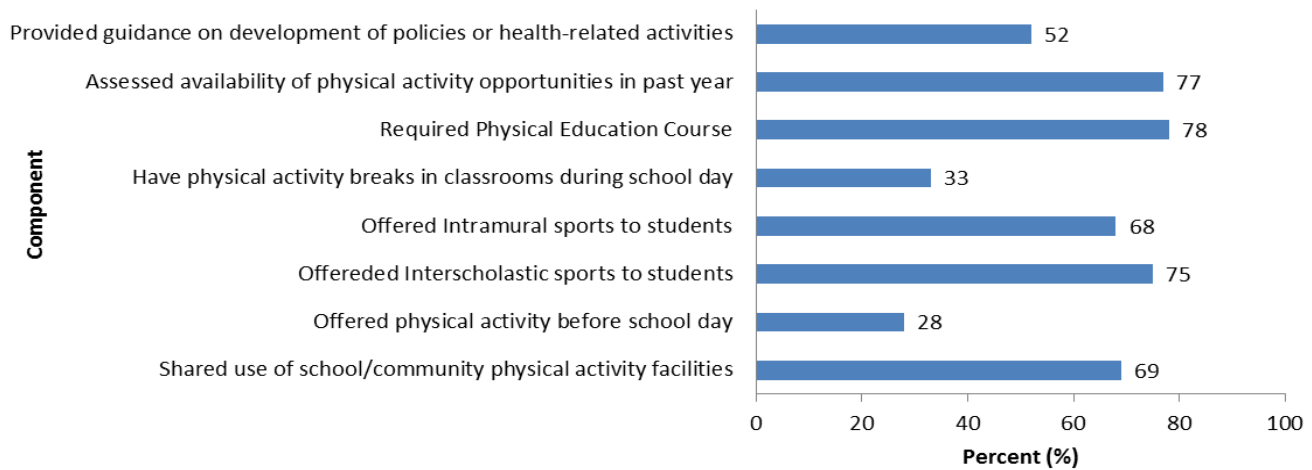
- **Forty-eight percent** have at least one group (e.g. a school health council, committee or team) that offers guidance on the development of policies or coordinates activities on health topics.
- **Seventy-four percent** have a school health council, committee or team that assessed the availability of physical activity opportunities for students during the past year.
- **Fifty-seven percent** taught a required physical education course.
- **Twenty-seven percent** have students participate in physical activity breaks during the school day, outside of physical education.
- **Sixty-three percent** offer opportunities for all students to participate in intramural sports programs or physical activity clubs.
- **Seventy-eight percent** offer interscholastic sports to students.
- **Thirty-three percent** offer opportunities for students to participate in physical activity before the school day through organized physical activities or access to facilities or equipment for physical activity.
- **Sixty-six percent** have a joint use agreement for shared use of school or community physical activity facilities.



GEORGIA MIDDLE SCHOOLS

- **Two percent** of middle schools have established, implemented or evaluated all components of CSPAP (Appendix 1).
- **Seventy-eight percent** of middle schools required a physical education course for each grade (Chart 1).
- **Seventy-five percent** of middle schools offered interscholastic sports to students (Chart 1).
- **Sixty-eight percent** of middle schools offered intramural sports (Chart 1).
- **Thirty-three percent** of middle schools have students participate in physical activity breaks in classrooms during the school day, outside of physical education (Chart 1).

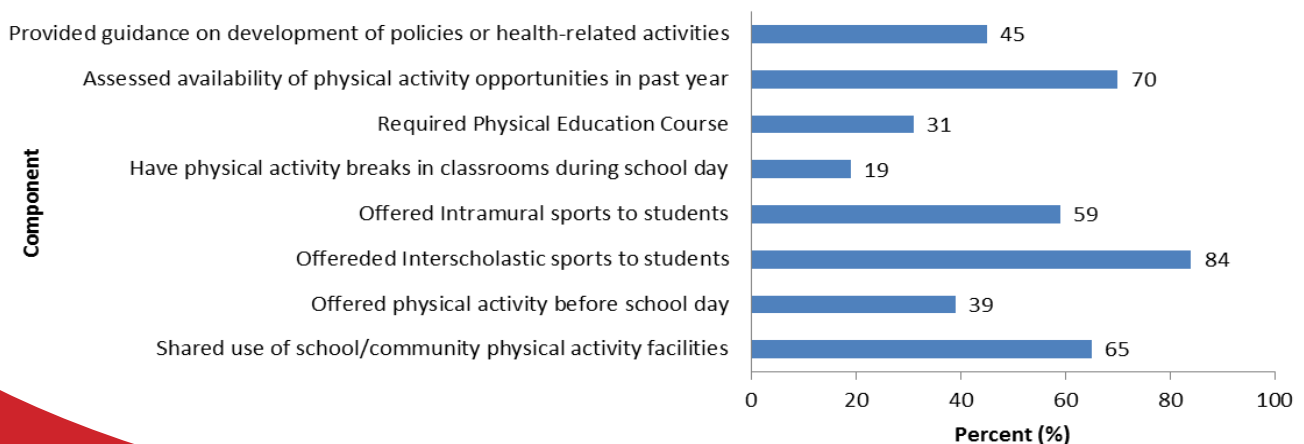
Chart 1. Percent of Georgia Middle Schools that Participate in CSPAP Components



GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOLS

- **One percent** of high schools established, implemented or evaluated all components of CSPAP (Appendix 1).
- **Eighty-four percent** of high schools offered interscholastic sports to students (Chart 2).
- **Fifty-nine percent** of high schools offered intramural sports (Chart 2).
- **Thirty-one percent** of high schools required a physical education course for each grade (Chart 2).
- **Nineteen percent** of high schools have students participate in physical activity breaks in classrooms during the school day, outside of physical education (Chart 2).

Chart 2. Percent of Georgia High Schools that Participate in CSPAP Components



How Can Schools Improve Physical Activity Among Students?

- **By requiring informative and inclusive physical education²:** Required physical education courses meet the needs of all students and provide an enjoyable learning experience. Quality physical education can provide students with the skills to continue physical activity outside of class time. ***Requiring physical education courses at all grade levels would guarantee that students meet the current national guidelines to participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily.***³
- **By offering students opportunities for physical activity during school²:** Students spend an average of six hours each day at school for approximately 180 days out of the year.⁶ Opportunities for physical activity during the school day, in addition to a physical education course, can help children meet the recommended 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day as well as improve academic performance by enhancing attentiveness and concentration in the classroom.^{3,7,8} Schools can institute daily school-wide physical activity during morning announcements, integrate physical activity into class lessons, allow for short breaks (five to ten minutes) throughout the school day and provide adequate space and equipment during designated recess time.
- **By offering students opportunities for physical activity before and after school²:** In addition to physical activity during the school day, opportunities for physical activity before and after school can help children meet the minimum recommendation of 60 minutes of physical activity each day.³ Schools may encourage students to walk or bike to school and can provide opportunities for students to join sports teams, either through intramural or interscholastic programs. Participation in intramural activities has been shown to benefit students' physical and social development, establish cooperative and competitive skills and is associated with improved mental health and fewer risky behaviors.^{9,10}
- **By fostering staff involvement²:** Faculty and staff members can serve as positive role models to students by demonstrating active lifestyle choices, which in turn encourages students to be active.²
- **By supporting family & community engagement²:** Schools can encourage parents, guardians and family members to participate in evening and weekend special events or to volunteer their time to lead physical activities². Coordination with community-based organizations (such as a YMCA or Parks and Recreation Department) to provide programs before and after school or establishing joint-use or shared-use agreements with schools would give students additional opportunities to be physically active, such as on the weekends, during the summer or during other holidays when schools may be closed. Community centers provide safe spaces for young people and their families to participate in physical activity.¹¹

For more information on implementing a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program, please see the CSPAP Guide at: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/physicalactivity/cspap.htm>

References

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Appendix 1. Prevalence of Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program Components

Percentage of Schools that have established, implemented or evaluated components of the Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) by School Level	Percent (%)		
	High School	Middle School	All Schools
<i>Percentage of schools that have established, implemented or evaluated all components of CSPAP</i>	0.8	1.9	1.7
Offer guidance on the development of policies or coordinates activities on health topics through a school health council, committee and/or team	44.7	51.5	48.2
Assessment of the availability of physical activity opportunities for students in the past year by a school health council, committee and/or team	70.4	77.0	74.0
Taught a required physical education course	30.5	78.1	57.2
Sixth Grade	-	82.1	82.0*
Seventh Grade	-	81.8	81.7*
Eighth Grade	-	81.5	80.8*
Ninth Grade	94.8	-	93.4*
Tenth Grade	45.6	-	45.4*
Eleventh Grade	39.0	-	39.1*
Twelfth Grade	37.8	-	37.9*
Students participate in physical activity breaks in classrooms during the school day, outside of physical education	18.8	33.0	27.2
Offer opportunities for all students to participate in intramural sports programs or physical activity clubs	59.3	67.5	63.3
Offer interscholastic sports to students	84.4	74.5	78.3
Offer opportunities for students in participate in physical activity before the school day through organized physical activities or access to facilities or equipment for physical activity	38.9	28.2	32.6
Have joint use agreement for shared use of school or community physical activity facilities	64.7	69.1	66.4

*Includes all schools with the specified grade level