

## Let's Play!

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It's pretty cool that all students in public elementary schools are required by law to play at school!

Yep! **HOUSE BILL 11-1069**, which was sponsored by REPRESENTATIVE(S) Massey and Fields, Casso, Duran, Ferrandino, Fischer, Hullinghorst, Kefalas, Labuda, Lee, Miklosi, Pabon, Pace, Peniston, Priola, Riesberg, Schafer S., Solano, Soper, Todd, Tyler, Vigil, Williams A., Wilson, Kerr A.; and SENATOR(S) Aguilar, Boyd, Foster, Guzman, Heath, Hudak, Johnston, Nicholson (1), made it possible.

The requirements of **HOUSE BILL 11-1069** are spelled out in reader-friendly language in the **COLORADO REVISED STATUTES** under **§22-32-136.5**, the children's wellness-physical activity requirement-legislative declaration.

The Statute mentions eight key factors supporting the physical activity requirement (2) in Public Elementary Schools:

*(I) Healthy children are more likely to be engaged learners, they do better in school, they have improved attendance, and they are less likely to have behavioral problems inside and outside of the classroom;*

*(II) Many studies have documented the link between the mind and body and the effect of movement on cognition and stimulated blood flow and oxygen to a child's brain;*

*(III) Studies also show that physical activity improves students' ability to focus and decreases the symptoms of attention deficit disorder and related conditions;*

*(IV) Children who engage in physical activity as part of the learning environment are healthier and process information better;*

*(V) The growing trend of childhood obesity is also beginning to affect the country's military preparedness. Recent reports show that, nationally, approximately one-third of all potential military recruits are ineligible to join because they are overweight and out of shape;*

*(VI) School is the only place that many children are exposed to physical activity;*

*(VII) According to the 2009 child health survey conducted by the department of public health and environment, one in four Colorado children are overweight or obese, and only fifty-three and five-tenths percent of children meet daily physical activity recommendations; and*

*(VIII) Between 2003 and 2007, Colorado's child obesity national ranking dropped from third leanest in the country to twenty-third, and the number of obese children in Colorado ten to seventeen years of age increased from 48,000 to 72,000.*

Based on the eight (8) key points listed above, the general assembly took the position that by reinforcing physical activity in the public schools, Colorado will *ensure that all children have access to activities that build their bodies and their brains and support their abilities to think, react, create, and learn* (2).

The general assembly identified 'physical activity' as including but certainly not being limited to (2):

*(a) Exercise programs;*

*(b) Fitness breaks;*

*(c) Recess;*

- (d) Field trips that include physical activity;*
- (e) Classroom activities that include physical activity; and*
- (f) Physical education classes.*

Beginning with the 2011–2012 school year, each school district’s Board of Education has been required to have a policy in place that integrates specific amounts of physical activity into each student’s school day. The designated amounts are as follows (2):

- (I) A minimum of six hundred minutes of physical activity per month if the classes at the school meet five days per week and the student attends school for a full day;*
- (II) A minimum of three hundred minutes of physical activity per month if the classes at the school meet five days per week and the student attends school for a half day;*
- (III) A minimum of thirty minutes of physical activity per day if the classes at the school meet fewer than five days per week and the student attends school for a full day; and*
- (IV) A minimum of fifteen minutes of physical activity per day if the classes at the school meet fewer than five days per week and the student attends school for a half day.*

The physical activity policy may include an excusal for months that include planned or even unplanned days (full-day or half-day) when schools are closed. A planned school closure would be months that include recognized holidays and unplanned school closures would be snow days, for example.

It is worth mentioning that schools are not permitted to use *noninstructional physical activity* such as recess as an alternative for *standards-based physical education instruction*.

Next time your Elementary-aged kiddo struggles to get to school, you might consider a new strategy...*you gotta go to school to play; it’s the law!*

References:

- 1. An Act HOUSE BILL 11-1069**
- 2. COLORADO REVISED STATUTES under §22-32-136.5. Children’s wellness-physical activity requirement.**