

TENNESSEE

Tenn. Code Ann. §49-6-1021. Physical activity requirements

Effective July 1, 2025

The scorecard was created as part of a policy toolkit that supports advancing recess in schools through state laws. It was developed by the research team, with input from the advisory board, to provide a starting point for advocates and policymakers seeking to improve recess legislation. A score of “0” indicates that the law requires further development. We recommend first incorporating all essential best practices, followed by any enhanced best practices that are appropriate for your state.

Tennessee has a physical activity law which may include walking, jumping rope, playing volleyball or other forms of physical activity that promote fitness and well-being.

BEST PRACTICE	LANGUAGE IN LAW	SCORE
ESSENTIAL BEST PRACTICES		
A. Mandates a time requirement of at least 20 minutes of daily recess	For elementary school students, <u>a minimum of forty (40) minutes</u> of physical activity per full school day; and For middle and high school students, <u>a minimum of ninety (90) minutes</u> of physical activity per full school week <i>Note: Physical activity law and not a recess-specific law</i>	1
B. Inclusive of all students in grades kindergarten-8	For <u>elementary school students</u> , a minimum of forty (40) minutes of physical activity <u>per full school day</u> ; and For <u>middle and high school students</u> , a minimum of ninety (90) minutes of physical activity <u>per full school week</u> .	2
C. Prohibits schools from withholding recess	A student <u>shall not be withheld from participating in physical activity</u> as a form of punishment.	2
D. Prohibits schools from using recess to fulfil state mandated physical education requirements	<u>Physical activity does not include (b) time spent by a student in a physical education class.</u>	2
E. Includes specific language on compliance	The office of coordinated school health in the department of education shall <u>provide an annual report</u> by October 1, to the education committees of the house of representatives and the education committee of the senate on the implementation of subsection (a)	2

BEST PRACTICE	LANGUAGE IN LAW	SCORE
ENHANCED PRACTICES		
F. Transition time does not count toward minimum time	Walking to and from class is not physical activity for purposes of this section.	2
G. Requires recess be provided on shortened school days	N/A	0
H. Requires recess to be inclusive for all students	N/A	0
I. Requires recess to be held outdoors	Physical activity must include unstructured play outside , unless weather conditions negatively impact reasonable execution of physical activity outside.	2
J. If recess is indoors, the law requires there to be adequate space for students to be physically active	N/A	0
K. Prohibits the use of personal electronic devices during recess	Physical activity does not include time during which a student is permitted to use an electronic device.	2
L. Requires schools to provide annual professional development opportunities for staff members who lead or supervise recess	N/A	0
M. Requires schools to schedule recess before lunch	N/A	0
N. Requires schools to provide age-appropriate equipment	N/A	0
O. Requires all recess equipment and facilities to meet or exceed safety standards	N/A	0