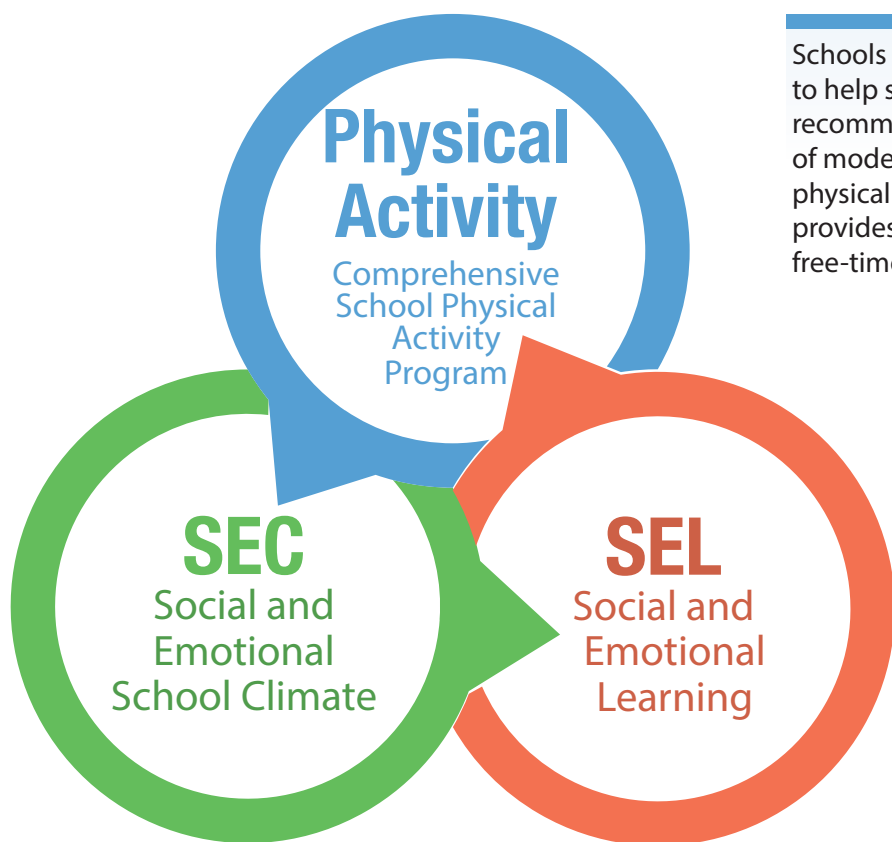


School Physical Education and Physical Activity Policies Can Support the Social and Emotional Climate and Learning

[The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child \(WSCC\) framework](#) shows how multiple aspects of the school environment support students' health, well-being, and academic success. This brief describes connections between a [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program \(CSPAP\)](#), the social and emotional school climate (SEC), and activities that support students' social and emotional learning (SEL).



Schools are in a unique position to help students get the nationally recommended 60 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity daily. A CSPAP provides time for organized and free-time physical activity for students through:



- Physical education.
- Physical activity during school (e.g., recess, physical activity breaks).
- Physical activity before and after school (e.g., walk-, bike-, or roll-to-school programs).
- Staff involvement.
- Family and community engagement.

A positive SEC helps facilitate effective teaching and learning by helping to develop students' [SEL](#), including:



- Managing emotions.
- Setting and achieving positive goals.
- Feeling and showing empathy for others.
- Establishing and maintaining positive relationships.
- Making responsible decisions.

The [SEC](#) includes aspects of students' educational experience that influence their social and emotional development. A positive SEC helps create safe and supportive learning environments that can affect student:






- Engagement in school activities.
- Relationships with other students, staff, family, and community.
- Academic performance.

Schools can increase opportunities for physical activity, help cultivate a positive SEC, and strengthen SEL by:

- **Assessing** physical education and physical activity policies and practices for alignment with SEL core competencies.
- **Incorporating** SEC and SEL into existing policies and school improvement plans.
- **Using** active classroom and recess practices that align with SEL core competencies.
- **Communicating** with parents about the connections between physical activity, SEC, and SEL, including benefits for students' health and academic success.

Schools can support a CSPAP and reinforce SEL core competencies at the same time.

Although schools may use specific SEL programs, curricula, and instructional practices to help students develop these skills, SEL core competencies can be taught in many ways and in various settings, such as physical education and recess, throughout the school day. The table below describes each of the SEL core competencies and provides examples of school physical activity policies and practices that reflect these competencies.

Social and Emotional Learning Core Competencies	Physical Education and Physical Activity Policies and Practices That Support Social and Emotional Learning Core Competencies
<p>Self-awareness:</p> <p>The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior.</p> 	<p>Physical education teaches students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop motor skills, knowledge, and behaviors that influence their ability to be physically active. • Recognize how physical activity affects their emotional well-being and how emotions may influence sedentary habits. <p>Schools can: Recognize the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction.</p>
<p>Self-management:</p> <p>The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations.</p> 	<p>Physical education teaches skills, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to set goals and practice motor skills. • How to exhibit responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others. <p>Schools can: Avoid using physical activity as punishment or withholding opportunities for physical activity as punishment.</p>
<p>Social Awareness:</p> <p>The ability to empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.</p> 	<p>Schools can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide materials about physical education and physical activity in languages that students and parents speak at home. • Provide safe and age-appropriate equipment for physical education, physical activity, and recess during the school day. • Assess student needs related to physical activity and provide counseling and other services to meet those needs and overcome barriers. • Ensure that school policies address weight-based bullying and teasing. • Ensure that the physical education curriculum features programming that reflects the student body, including students with disabilities and different body shapes and sizes. • Provide daily recess to allow time for social interaction, relationship building, and free play with peers.
<p>Relationship Skills:</p> <p>The ability to start and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse people and groups.</p> 	<p>Physical education lessons that teach cooperation and conflict resolution can foster teamwork between peers and with teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active lessons in the classroom also allow students to participate in physical activity with a supportive and caring adult. • Recess also allows for developing social interaction skills. <p>Schools can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that classroom physical activity is appropriate and safe for all students by communicating safety and behavioral expectations.
<p>Responsible Decision-making:</p> <p>The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about how to behave and interact after considering ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms, and after realistically evaluating consequences of various actions and the well-being of self and others.</p> 	<p>Physical education teaches how to set goals and track activities to encourage healthy choices.</p> <p>Schools can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve families and engage students through focus groups to provide input about policies and practices for physical education and physical activity. • Allow daily recess for free play, autonomous decision making, and creative expression with peers.



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