

Arizona

Strengthening Statewide Physical Education Standards to Promote Student Health

Problem Overview

In 2007, Youth Risk Behavior Survey results indicated that among Arizona's high school students

- 12% were obese.
- 68% did not get the recommended amount of physical activity.
- 73% did not attend physical education (PE) classes daily.

At that time, Arizona was one of the few states with PE standards that were not consistent with national standards. Arizona had no requirement for PE as a stand-alone class and did not allocate funding for PE.

Program/Activity Description

In 2006, the Arizona legislature mandated a Physical Education Pilot Program to collect data on the effectiveness of PE. During the 2007–2008 school year, four elementary schools participated in the program. The schools were required to implement PE strategies that were aligned with CDC guidance (e.g., 150 minutes of PE per week, with at least 50% of students' time spent in moderate or vigorous physical activity; at least one certified PE teacher for every 500 students).

The pilot program was evaluated by a physical activity, nutrition, and tobacco (PANT) coordinator, funded by CDC, and an external team from Arizona State University.

The evaluation showed that

- Physical activity levels increased by 17% during the school day and 6% outside school.
- School absences decreased by 13%.
- Standardized test scores remained stable, even with more time spent in PE during the school day.

Program/Activity Outcomes

PANT coordinators promoted the program's successes to legislators and education leaders. In 2009, the Arizona legislature authorized revision of the state's PE standards for the first time since 1997. The revised state standards are now aligned with national standards and will substantially improve the quality of PE for students. Featured revisions include

- Addition of defined concepts that guide teachers on what students are expected to learn and demonstrate by the end of the course.
- An emphasis on personalized fitness and behavior outcomes.

CDC funding helped train more than 300 health and physical education teachers in Arizona to help implement the new standards.