



June 12, 2026

Dr. Antoinette Mitchell
State Superintendent of Education
Office of the State Superintendent of Education
1050 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Superintendent Mitchell,

The duties of the D.C. State Board of Education (State Board) include advising the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) on educational matters, including statewide academic standards, and having approval authority over standards recommended by OSSE.¹ The State Board is excited provide feedback on the draft physical education standards released for public comment in February 2026. We are grateful for the hard work of the standards writers who contributed to this draft. The State Board looks forward to collaborating with OSSE to continue the process toward adopting these updated standards.

Positive Feedback

1. Rather than creating something completely new, OSSE **based the draft standards on the National Physical Education Standards from SHAPE America**. These standards are used by many states and districts, have recently been revised by a task force of national experts, and are widely regarded for their quality and focus on equity.² The standards as currently drafted are straightforward and appropriate for each grade band. The glossary is also appreciated because it ensures common definitions for terms.
2. The proposed standards meet the goal of updating standards to **reflect evolving best practices in physical education**. During the February working session, OSSE stated that the updated SHAPE national standards give DC the opportunity to update local standards, which have not been updated since 2017. The revised national standards emphasize students' physical literacy journeys that help them pursue a lifetime of healthful and meaningful physical activity. The revised standards also move from grade-specific to grade-band indicators, recognizing that development is not the same for all students. These

¹ D.C. Official Code § 38–2652(a)(1)(A) and § 38–2652(a)(2).

² In their expert panelist testimonies at the May 20, 2026 public meeting, Michelle Carter, Director of Educational Content and Programs at SHAPE America; Miriam Kenyon, Director, Health and Physical Education at District of Columbia Public Schools; Jermar Rountree, PreK–8th Grade Health and Physical Education Teacher at Center City Public Charter Schools; and Brad Weiner, Adapted Physical Education Specialist at Fairfax County Public Schools, praised the SHAPE standards. Copies of their testimonies are included in the Appendix.





changes reflect evolving best practices in physical education, and as Michelle Carter shared during the expert panel at the May 20, 2026 public meeting, the new standards “move PE toward an approach centered on “growth, inclusion, safety, and lifelong wellness.”³

3. OSSE **aligned language in the standards** with the state’s existing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Standards, which promotes consistency and integration across content areas.
4. OSSE conducted listening sessions and outreach to parents, physical education teachers, Local Education Agency (LEA) and school leaders, students, and the general public, and was **responsive to feedback**, such as accepting suggestions to define additional terms from the standards.

Questions

5. How will OSSE ensure **equitable access** to standards that require specific facilities, such as “1.2.17 Demonstrates water safety skills. If a pool facility is available demonstrates water safety and basic swimming skills?” The State Board asks OSSE to clarify how water safety skills will be taught in the absence of a pool and to work with other government agencies and partners to address inequities in access to facilities and equipment.
6. How does OSSE plan to **evaluate the success** of the updated standards? What indicators will OSSE analyze to evaluate whether the standards have had a positive impact over the first five years of implementation?

Suggestions for Implementation

7. Add information or examples into the standards document to explain how students with disabilities can be supported in accessing the standards through **adaptive physical education** and ensure that physical educators receive support to implement adaptive physical education as updated standards are rolled out. During the expert panel at the May 20, 2026 public meeting, Brad Weiner shared about the need for professional development and instructional support for physical education teachers to implement adaptive physical education.⁴ He also noted that ensuring this access for students with disabilities requires collaboration with special educators, school leaders, parents, and students. The State Board encourages OSSE to include specific guidance and training on adaptive physical education.

³ See the Appendix for a copy of this testimony.

⁴ See the Appendix for a copy of this testimony.





8. The State Board wants to reiterate the importance of providing physical educators with **training, communities of practice, curricular resources, and ongoing professional development** to support the implementation of updated physical education standards. During the expert panel at the May 20, 2026 public meeting, Jermar Rountree shared about barriers to developing a community of practice as a physical educator in a charter LEA.⁵ The State Board encourages OSSE to explore how to facilitate collaboration among physical educators across LEAs.
9. During the February 4, 2026 working session, OSSE noted plans to **support physical educators with alignment with the SEL standards**. The State Board supports these efforts and encourages OSSE to make this effort part of the guidance and training for educators implementing the updated standards.

The State Board thanks OSSE again for their work on creating this draft of the physical education standards. We see and appreciate the time and effort that has been spent to adapt the national standards to be relevant for the District's students. The State Board is excited at the prospect of fulfilling our statutory duties and approving a finalized version of the updated standards at the public meeting on August 19, 2026. We would be happy to address any questions you have about our comment letter.

Sincerely,

The D.C. State Board of Education

⁵ See the Appendix for a copy of this testimony.



APPENDIX: Expert Panelist Testimony from May 20, 2026 SBOE Public Meeting

Prepared Testimony for DC State Board of Education

Introduction

Good evening DC State Board of Education Members.

Thank you for having me, my name is Michelle Carter, I'm the Director of Educational Content & Programs at SHAPE America. For context, SHAPE America is the national professional association for health and physical educators. We provide best practices and guidelines for health and PE teachers to include the development of our National Physical Education Standards. But prior to working at SHAPE America, I was a teacher here in Washington, DC. I taught health and PE at Scott Montgomery Elementary, Garrison Elementary and Alice Deal Middle School. So, I'm excited and honored to be here on the panel for DC's revision of their physical education standards.

As I just mentioned, SHAPE America develops the National Physical Education Standards which were updated in 2024. Prior to the 2024 revision, it had been 11 years since the last set of national standards had been updated. The timing of the review and updating of the National Physical Education Standards coincided with the timing of the pandemic and its resulting impact. With all of these considerations, SHAPE America launched a task force and a process to revise the physical education standards to respond to meet the educational needs of students today. Since then, many states have adopted our National PE Standards or closely align their state standards. Today I will provide the board with the most notable shifts in the new standards along with points to consider that will provide guiding framework for physical education in the coming years.

National Physical Education Standards Notable Changes

The task force spent a great deal of thought, reflection, and time revising the National Physical Education Standards. Task force members intentionally spent time developing a strong philosophical foundation for the standards; reviewing current research; investigating physical education standards from other countries; consulting with experts in equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI); and collecting feedback from the field. This collective process resulted in these most notable changes: (a) the expansion of the term physical literacy to physical literacy journey; (b) the shift from grade-level outcomes to grade-span learning indicators, which include learning progressions; (c) the change from five to four standards; and (d) a more student-centered approach to the standards.

The first notable change is the use of the term physical literacy journey. SHAPE America's definition of physical literacy was, and remains, "the ability to move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments that benefit the healthy development of the whole person." Physical literacy, however, is too often conceptualized in modern PE-related contexts as something that is objectively achievable at a fixed point; with a rigid and narrow path needed to successfully do so. By choosing to use the term physical literacy journey it provides a more holistic approach that considers the individual student and their developmental journey throughout their physical education experience and beyond. Simply put, the use of the term physical literacy journey clarifies that the development of physical literacy is a lifelong endeavor that is constantly evolving as an individual develops and matures—not an end goal.

The next notable shift is from grade-level outcomes to grade-span learning indicators. The 2014 national standards for PE included the addition of grade-level outcomes. These outcomes were well received and gave teachers more support in developing the local curriculum to guide students towards meeting the standards. However, the individual student and their actual stage of development were not considered, making the outcomes too narrow and not inclusive in many instances. This perspective led to the shift from grade-level outcomes to grade-span learning indicators. This change is based on the principle that motor skill development is not dependent on age, but on a student's opportunity to practice a skill and on the amount of instruction and encouragement they receive. Therefore, it would not be realistic to expect all of the students within a third-grade class to be at the same skill level or stage of motor development at the end of the school year. The grade-span learning indicators are also written in a way that is broader than the grade-level outcomes to encompass multiple grade-levels and stages of development. They are designed to be measurable, observable, and of use to teachers as they develop assessments and learning experiences for their students.

Another notable change is changing from five to four standards. The 2024 National Physical Education Standards are written and organized by the learning domains — psychomotor, cognitive, affective, and the newly recognized social domain. Standard 3 focuses on the social domain and students interact with others within movement settings developing skills for communication and leadership, cultural awareness and working with others. Standard 4 focuses on the affective specifically on personal skills related to movement such as goal setting and exploring how movement is meaningful to them. Health-related fitness, which had its own standard previously, is now embedded within the standards throughout the grade-span learning indicators.

The last notable change, and arguably the most important change, is the more student-centered approach of the standards. This especially comes through in Standard 4 where students are given opportunities to reflect on their physical education experiences. When students are given choice and autonomy to explore a variety of physical activities, physical education becomes more meaningful.

The National Physical Education Standards were designed to be accessible to all students, regardless of their ability, age, class, gender, or race. They are written based on the idea that everyone can acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to be confident movers in physical activities that are enjoyable, meaningful, and/or relevant to the individual thus supporting their physical literacy journey.

Points to Consider

A few additional points I would like the Board to consider as you move toward revising the DC Physical Education Standards are all deeply interconnected.

First, I encourage the Board to consider how physical education looks today. Many adults remember PE through the lens of their own experiences, and for some, those experiences were not positive. However, physical education has evolved significantly. The new National Physical Education Standards move PE toward an approach centered on growth, inclusion, safety, and lifelong wellness. The goal is no longer simply for students to play sports or complete activities, but to help every student develop the knowledge, skills, confidence, and motivation to lead physically active and healthy lives.

We want students to enjoy movement for a lifetime and to see physical activity as something meaningful and personally relevant. To accomplish that, teachers must be supported in implementing

instructional frameworks and best practices that align with that vision. Quality physical education creates environments where all students feel safe, successful, and encouraged to participate, regardless of their skill level or previous experiences. **(Suggested reading: [PE Now](#))**

I also believe that health and physical education serve as the foundation for success in every other subject area. A student cannot fully engage in learning — whether that is solving math problems, analyzing literature, or conducting scientific inquiry — if they are not physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally well. The skills developed in health and PE extend far beyond the gymnasium. Students learn self-management, communication, collaboration, resilience, goal-setting, and healthy decision-making — skills that directly support their success both in school and throughout adulthood.

Ironically, as adults, our health is often one of the things we value most, yet we do not always treat health and physical education with that same level of importance within our educational systems. That is why I also urge the Board to prioritize equitable access to health and physical education for all students. Too often, PE or health classes are reduced, waived, or substituted so students can take additional courses or participate in more athletic practice time. While those opportunities may be valuable, they are not replacements for standards-based physical education. **(Suggested reading: [Physical Education is Essential for All Student](#))**

There is intentional learning taking place in PE that cannot be replicated elsewhere. Physical education teaches students how to become lifelong movers who understand the importance of prioritizing their health and wellness. Allowing widespread substitutions or waivers risks shortchanging students in developing skills and habits they will carry into adulthood.

Lastly, I encourage the Board to consider the professional development and support teachers will need in order to successfully implement revised standards. If we want physical education programs that are inclusive, student-centered, and aligned with best practices, we must ensure teachers feel prepared and supported in delivering that instruction. Professional learning is essential to helping educators create safe learning environments, effectively implement new standards, and build confidence in their teaching practices. When teachers are adequately supported, students benefit from richer learning experiences and from programs that truly reflect the value and importance of physical education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, despite the changes over the last decade, we have collectively been reminded of the importance of taking care of our social, mental, physical, and emotional well-being. The future of school-based health education and physical education are both poised to have a truly pivotal role in shaping the well-rounded education every student deserves. The National Physical Education Standards provide these crucial frameworks for ensuring consistency and quality in programming and addressing the holistic development of students across the district.

Thank you again for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. It's truly an honor.

- i. What is the impetus behind the updates to the National PE Standards?
- ii. What resources, training, and supports will physical educators need to implement the updated standards?
- iii. How can LEA and school leaders best support physical educators in implementing updated standards?
- iv. What are best practices for physical educators in designing standards-aligned lessons?



**State Board of Education Panel – Physical Education Standards
Wednesday, May 20th, 2026**

**Testimony of Miriam Kenyon, Director, Health and Physical Education
District of Columbia Public Schools**

Good evening members of the State Board of Education, staff, and members of the public. My name is Miriam Kenyon, and I am the Director of Health and Physical Education at DC Public Schools (DCPS). Thank you for the opportunity to share our approach to delivering high-quality, standards-aligned physical education and to speak to our support for the proposed new standards.

At DCPS, our goal is to equip every student with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to lead a healthy, active life. Physical education is not simply about participation, it is an academic discipline that builds physical literacy, supports goal-setting, and helps students make meaningful connections between what they learn in school and how they live beyond it. We want our students to feel empowered to safely access and enjoy the many resources available in their communities across the District.

To that end, our program is intentionally designed to connect students with real-world environments and lifelong activities. For example, through our “Biking in the Park” unit, every second grader learns to ride a bike and culminates their learning with a supervised ride to a nearby park. This experience not only builds physical skills but also fosters independence and encourages families to take advantage of DC’s extensive trail system and parks. Similarly, all third-grade students participate in a foundational swimming and water safety program. This instruction is lifesaving, but it also builds familiarity and confidence with aquatic spaces. We routinely see students return to these pools with their families during the summer, demonstrating how school-based learning translates into real-world engagement. Throughout their time at DCPS, students engage in a variety of activities like these. I’m happy to share more examples when it’s time for questions.

For students to fully engage in these experiences, they must feel safe taking what I often describe as “academic risks.” In physical education, that means trying something new, persisting through challenges, and learning from setbacks. We intentionally cultivate inclusive and supportive environments where students feel encouraged to grow, knowing that success may take time and practice.

This philosophy also informed our involvement in the development of the updated national standards. In November 2023, I had the opportunity to serve on a SHAPE America task force, where we provided feedback on draft standards, identifying gaps and ensuring coherence. I am encouraged that the proposed standards emphasize the application of skills beyond the classroom and frame physical literacy as a lifelong, evolving journey. These shifts align closely with the direction DCPS has already taken. The new standards integrate opportunities for



reflection, reinforcing our district-wide commitment to metacognition, and helping students better understand their own growth and progress.

Equally important is how we support our educators. We provide ongoing professional development focused on standards alignment, inclusive practices, and student-centered instruction. Through coaching cycles, teachers receive individualized support to create engaging lessons where students collaborate, build skills, and grow together. As part of our district-wide professional learning offerings, teachers can learn from our Adaptive Physical Education specialists to ensure that students with disabilities have full access to the curriculum. These educators work closely with students whose Individualized Education Plans include adapted PE, using both push-in and pull-out models to meet students' needs.

Because we firmly believe that physical education is for every student, accessibility is central to our approach. We embed consistent routines and clear expectations to support all learners. We provide modified equipment and differentiated instruction to ensure participation is both safe and meaningful. For instance, during our archery unit, some students use adapted equipment that allows them to practice core skills in a way that meets their physical needs while maintaining the integrity of the activity.

Ultimately, our goal is for every student to understand that physical activity contributes not only to physical health, but also to their social, emotional, and mental well-being. A strong, standards-based physical education program builds confidence, fosters resilience, and introduces students to a wide range of activities they can carry with them throughout their lives.

The proposed standards reflect these priorities and provide a strong framework to continue advancing this work across the District. We are proud of our collaboration in this process and remain committed to ensuring that all DCPS students receive a high-quality physical education that prepares them for lifelong health and success.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.

Good Evening Board Members, Thank you for having me!

My name is Jermar “Coach” Rountree, and I am a Physical Education and Health teacher at Center City PCS Brightwood Campus. I have taught in the District for 15 years, serving students from Pre-K through 8th grade. I also both teach and live in Ward 4. My students walk to school past Georgia Avenue, they play at Emery Rec Center, and they deserve a PE experience that meets them where they are.

In my 15 years in the district, the gyms, the playgrounds, and classrooms, I have seen what works. I have also seen what happens when our standards fall behind the needs of our students.

As a Ward 4 teacher, I believe these updated standards are not just needed, they are necessary if we want to give our students the PE experience they deserve.

First, the proposed updates reflect the classroom I teach in today.

I started teaching under DC’s 2007 standards, and while they were strong for their time, our students are facing needs we could not have fully predicted nearly two decades ago. From Pre-K students learning how to share space, build self-awareness, and grow confidence, to middle school students navigating stress, social media, cyberbullying, and conflicts that do not always stay in the school building, our standards must reflect the self-regulation, personal responsibility, and social awareness students need today.

SHAPE America’s 2024 National Standards speak to the students I see right now. The focus on motor skills and movement patterns, concepts and strategies, health-enhancing fitness, and personal and social responsibility is what I am teaching every day.

Second, best practice in PE means every lesson is intentional and standards-aligned.

Early in my career, PE could sometimes be viewed as activity for activity’s sake. But that is not where we are anymore.

From Pre-K through 8th grade, standards-aligned PE means every lesson has a purpose. Our youngest students are learning how to move with control, follow directions, and build coordination. Our elementary students are learning how to move safely, think strategically, and reflect on their choices. Our middle school students are learning how to assess fitness, set goals, track progress, and understand how movement connects to their overall health. At every level, students are also practicing respect, safety, teamwork, leadership, and responsibility. That is PE that is measurable, meaningful, and engaging, and it reminds every student, whether they see themselves as an athlete or not, “You are a mover.”

Third, updated standards must center adaptive PE, because every student in our gym deserves the chance to move, participate, and feel successful.

For 15 years, I have taught students with a wide range of abilities. Best practice is not pulling students aside or lowering expectations. Best practice is creating access.

For example, if I am teaching a fitness circuit, every student is working toward the same standard, but their access point may look different. One student may complete jumping jacks, another may do step-outs, another may use a chair for seated movements, and another may lead the timer or model the movement for the group. I have also seen students who may have been labeled as “disruptive” in a traditional gym setting become leaders when the lesson was designed with them in mind. A student with a lot of energy can become the warm-up leader, and a student who struggles with communication can still demonstrate movement, lead peers, and meet the standard in their own way. The goal is not to separate students from the lesson. The goal is to design the lesson so every student has a meaningful way to participate, move, lead, and be successful. That is what inclusion should look like in PE.

That is what modern standards make possible. Inclusion is not an add-on. It is the expectation.

So why should DC adopt updated standards modeled from the SHAPE 2024 National Standards? From my experience, there are three major reasons.

Adopting updated standards matters for three reasons. First, it supports teachers by giving us clear, modern guidance so we can spend less time translating old documents and more time planning strong instruction. Second, it meets kids where they are by connecting movement to mental health, student choice, culture, and personal responsibility. Third, it advances equity, because for many students, PE may be the safest and most consistent opportunity they have to move, lead, play, and experience joy during the school day.

But updated standards cannot just live on paper. Teachers need professional development, adaptive equipment, updated curriculum resources, safe spaces for movement, and time to collaborate across grade levels and campuses. If we want these standards to work, we have to give teachers the tools, training, and support to bring them to life for every student.

Board Members, in 15 years I have seen students who would not leave the wall learn to gallop because the lesson was designed for their success. I have seen students who said they “hated PE” become the same students leading warm-ups, setting up equipment, and encouraging classmates because they realized leadership was part of the standard.

DC has set a strong goal around PE minutes. Now, let's make sure those minutes are supported by quality standards, strong resources, and meaningful instruction. Let's give our teachers standards that match the research and our students PE experiences that build physical literacy, confidence, and belonging, while making sure every student has a place in the gym.

Thank You

**Written Testimony of Brad Weiner
to DC's State Board of Education on the proposed updated physical
education standards as they apply to students with adapted physical
education services
May 20, 2026**

Good evening, members of the DC State Board of Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the proposed updated physical education standard document and its application to students receiving adapted physical education services.

My name is Brad Weiner. I am an adapted physical education, educational specialist with 20 years of experience. I am nationally certified in adapted physical education, a National Board Certified teacher in early and middle childhood physical education, and I was honored as the 2013 National Adapted Physical Education Teacher of the Year.

It is important to understand that under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), adapted physical education is a special education service. Its purpose is to address the educational impact of a student's disability so they can access instruction and make progress toward grade-level curriculum and standards.

Adapted physical education is often misunderstood as being a separate class, placement, or person. As part of the definition of special education, it is the process of adapting content, instruction, methodology, and includes adapting equipment, environment, and assessment so students with disabilities can meaningfully participate in standards-aligned physical education.

The proposed DC standards, which are based on the National SHAPE America standards, already provide a strong foundation for integrative and equitable practice. I served on the review panel for those national standards, and accessibility and diversity were central to the work. The standards were intentionally designed to account for varied developmental levels and learning needs, including students with disabilities.

Best practice in adapted physical education begins with the general education curriculum and grade-level standards. Teachers use task analysis and instructional modifications to create developmentally appropriate access points for students with disabilities.

For example, during a seventh-grade dance unit, students working on grade level will learn and refine their ability to sequence movements within a variety of dance forms using balance, coordination, and motor planning skills. In the same lesson, another seventh-grade student working at an earlier developmental level may focus on imitating a short sequence of arm movements to a repeated four-beat rhythm. The standard remains aligned, but the instructional pathway is individualized.

That individualized approach is what meaningful access looks like.

To implement standards-aligned adapted physical education successfully, physical educators need significantly more support and training.

Professional development should include:

- special education law and IEP development,
- task analysis and instructional modification,
- behavioral and sensory supports,
- structured learning environments,
- visual supports and communication systems,
- and collaboration with multidisciplinary teams.

Physical educators should not be expected to do this work in isolation. Successful adapted physical education depends on collaboration among physical educators, special educators, related service providers, school administrators, parents, the students and other unnamed professionals.

One of the greatest barriers schools face is the lack of sustained professional development and ongoing instructional support. Too often, teachers are asked to serve students with highly diverse needs without adequate preparation, planning time, equipment, or collaborative structures.

Another major barrier is the misconception that access simply means participation. True access means students are receiving instruction that is appropriately designed so they can make meaningful educational progress.

When students experience success in physical education, they develop confidence, persistence, and positive relationships with movement and physical activity. When instruction is not appropriately designed, students often disengage and lose confidence in their abilities.

Access to standards-aligned physical education begins with the IEP team engaging in data-based discussions and decisions related to physical education. For that to happen consistently, local education agencies and the State must ensure that special education policies and procedures are fully implemented within the physical education content area. That includes ensuring a licensed physical educator is present at IEP meetings whenever physical education is being discussed, and ensuring adapted physical education services are included on IEPs when appropriate to meet students' unique needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

Supportive Resource:

- National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities (NCPEID)
 - <http://www.ncpeid.org/>
 - [NCPEID's Guidance for Administrators regarding Adapted Physical Education Service Delivery](#)