

Increase Physical Activity and Physical Education in Kentucky Schools

Position

The Kentucky Diabetes Network Inc. and the American Diabetes Association support legislation which would require daily physical activity for all Kentucky public school students K-8 and increase physical education requirements in elementary, middle and high schools.

Rationale

- Kentucky has the third highest rate of overweight youth in the nation.
- Kentucky is the fourth most sedentary state in the nation.
- Providing physical activity for students has been shown to improve “on task behavior” during academic instruction.
- Students who perform well on measures of physical fitness tend to score higher on state reading and math exams, regardless of socioeconomic status or gender.
- High school students who participate in physical education five days a week are 28% less likely to be overweight adults.
- During the school week, children spend almost half of their waking hours in a school setting. It seems reasonable to include 30 minutes of physical activity during this six to eight hour period.
- There is broad public support for this idea. In the 2004 Kentucky Obesity Forums, “increasing physical activity in schools” was ranked as the number one priority in nine forums attended by 1300 people across the state. In a 2008 Partnership for a Fit Kentucky survey, 84% of the 885 respondents ranked this issue in the top four most important policies to combat obesity in their communities.

Background

Physical activity refers to playing at recess, before and after school activities, and “energizers” that integrate movement into the classroom.

Physical education refers to a structured curriculum taught by a certified physical education instructor.

Currently there are no requirements for physical activity or physical education in Kentucky public elementary schools. Though most elementary schools offer both, some do not and there is a great deal of variation in the amount and quality from school to school. Elementary schools are allowed to use up to 30 minutes of curriculum time per day for physical activity. Some Kentucky teachers take recess away from students as a form of punishment.

Public middle school students in Kentucky are not required to take physical education, though most students take one semester during this two to three year period. Kentucky high school students are required to have one-half unit of physical education to graduate. Middle and high schools almost never offer recess to students.

Physical activity bills were filed in the 2006, 2007 and 2008 Kentucky General Assembly sessions but were not passed. Two bills were introduced for the 2009 Kentucky legislative session. Representatives Addia Wuchner and Tom Burch were co-sponsors of HB 11, and Senator Katie Stine sponsored SB 6. Both bills proposed that schools provide for at least 30 minutes of structured, moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, or 150 minutes per week in a minimum of 10 minute intervals. Schools could incorporate physical activity into the classroom, structured recess or by other means. HB 11 targeted students K-5th grade, and urges grades 6-8 to adopt similar policies. SB 6 covered public preschool to 8th grade, and prohibited exclusion from structured physical activity as a form of discipline.

Representative Addia Wuchner has introduced House Bill 52 for the 2010 session, <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/10RS/HB52.htm> . **See back of this page for description of HB 52.**

Adapted by KDN Inc. from: *Shaping Kentucky’s Future: Policies to Reduce Obesity, 2009.*

AN ACT relating to physical activity designed to reduce obesity and improve body mass index in children.

Create a new section of KRS Chapter 156 to require the Kentucky Department of Education to identify and disseminate model resources for integrating physical activity during the school day; encourage schools to utilize certified physical education teachers in the development of physical activity plans; develop a reporting mechanism for schools containing grades K-5 to report physical activity, aggregate body mass index, and wellness program data; require the Department of Education to report no later than November 1 of each year to the Interim Joint Committee on Education and the Interim Joint Committee on Health and Welfare; require the Department of Education to share data with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services to assist in planning improvements in health services for children; amend KRS 160.345 to require that school council wellness policies provide for at least 30 minutes of structured moderate to vigorous physical activity, 150 minutes per week, or the equivalent per month; require school councils to report progress data; require that structured physical activity be considered part of the instructional day; prohibit exclusion from structured physical activity as a form of discipline; encourage schools with grades 6-8 to adopt similar policies; amend KRS 158.6453 to require inclusion of physical activity and wellness data in school report card; cite the Act as the Healthy Kids Act.

(Prefiled by the sponsor(s).)

Jan 5-introduced in House; to Education (H)