



SUPPORT the PHYSICAL Act! Health Education and Physical Education as Core Subjects

Health and physical education are often considered ancillary subjects, first to be cut in budget shortfalls, often taught by teachers unprepared for the subject matter and often scheduled only to meet minimum requirements, if at all.

Evidence clearly shows physically active students who eat nutritiously and are provided instruction in other health-promoting practices have better attendance, test-taking behavior, grades, and other academic outcomes, as well as lower rates of obesity and other health risks.

Children born today have a shorter life expectancy than their parents, as they are more obese and more likely to have debilitating chronic diseases as children, earlier than any generation before them. In the past 30 years, child obesity rates have more than tripled, with one in three children ages 10-17 either overweight or obese. This costs the U.S. healthcare system an estimated \$270 billion per year.

Research has shown that participating in physical activity and physical education improves student attendance, participation and enthusiasm for academic subjects and motivation to learn, and reduces misbehavior and discipline problems. Evidence also shows that effective school health education reduces the health risks of students, including lowering smoking, heavy drinking, school misbehavior and violence.

Both the Institute and Medicine (IOM) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) document substantial evidence that physical education and activity can help improve academic achievement and can improve cognitive skills and attitudes, enhanced concentration and attention, classroom behavior and health literacy. The IOM also recommends elevating physical education to a "core subject" to help combat the childhood obesity epidemic.

Unfortunately, neither physical education nor health education is given adequate time in schools. Only six states require daily physical education in all grades K-12 and no state requires comprehensive health education on a routine basis in grades K-12.

There are national standards for school health and for physical education, but no federal requirement to meet them. Academic subjects that are not considered "core" are at risk of being marginalized and eventually eliminated as public school principals and administrators struggle to meet adequate yearly progress for core subjects in order to maintain federal funding, especially when state budgets are fiscally challenging to balance.

Senator Tom Udall (NM) and Representative Marcia Fudge (OH) have introduced **The Promoting Health for Youth Skills In Classrooms And Life (PHYSICAL) Act**, which will designate health and physical education as core subjects (like civics, arts, and geography), in order to make these subjects eligible for federal funding under Title I and Title II in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

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