



May 4, 2010

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School Principals**

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Deborah Wynn
Assistant Executive Director
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Dear Members of The Pennsylvania State Board of Education:

The Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals (PAESSP) has a number of concerns with the proposed additions to Chapter 12 Students and Student Services, specifically Nutrition and Student Physical Activity. We, as an association, understand the importance of proper nutrition and the need for physical activity for the students we care for on a daily basis. Our members see first-hand what our students eat and note their lack of physical activity. We observe the many health problems of some of our students.

While we think more work needs to be done in limiting unhealthy food choices being brought from home in student lunches, our comments will focus on the Student Physical Activity section.

- While active commuting is a good idea, schools are often pressured by parents and insurance carriers because of safety concerns to bus students, and are discouraged from encouraging student walking.
- “Moderate to vigorous” physical activity is very vague language that will allow too many different interpretations leading to a whole host of future issues. The philosophy in physical education today is teaching students about lifelong skills. *Would golf and archery even qualify as “moderate to vigorous” physical activities under the proposed regulations?*
- With the need in flexibility of schedules, we are unsure why a highly qualified teacher is needed to for physical education classes. There are many qualified people that could be used one or two hours a day to assist, and at a much lower cost.
- The increased emphasis on student achievement and the limits placed on work day and work year to take away the opportunity to use physical activity time for instructional time is of grave concern to school principals. In a perfect world, time for instruction and time for physical activity are equally important. Unfortunately, with the increased emphasis on testing, priorities must be established and taking that local control decision away from teachers and administrators should not be permitted.

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Affiliate of the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals

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- The requirement to provide a set number of minutes for physical activity in 12.84 is not practical, and in many cases, it is impossible to achieve without significant changes to many school's physical education plants. Most school gyms are currently utilized the majority of the school day with much less time devoted to physical education. To comply with this requirement at the secondary level would require doing away with the arts, band, home economics, industrial arts and many enrichment classes such as yearbook and photography. It would eliminate students taking college credit work, participating in internships and other volunteer community projects.
- Because of the utilization of both the physical plan and teaching staff it is impractical to schedule recess to only the morning hours and to suggest otherwise is not necessary.
- Again, it is impossible in 12.83 (d) to limit sedentary time to a two-hour limit.

As mentioned in the beginning of this correspondence, PAESSP understands the importance of nutrition and exercise, but going forward with these regulations is not in the best interests of anyone. We are especially concerned that these proposed regulations were released in the beginning of April at the start of student testing when everyone in education knows the emphasis is on the PSSA, and the teachers and principals have little time for anything else. **More input is needed and we urge the State Board to table these proposed regulations at this time.** The Board has the choice to get the regulations passed or to correct the regulations so that they benefit students, staff and their communities. We hope you will choose the latter.

Sincerely,



PAESSP Assistant Executive Director