

Physical Activity in Washington Middle Schools

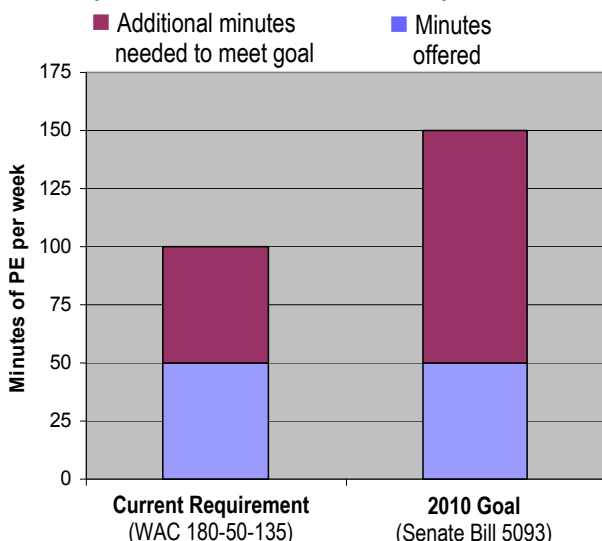


Brief V • 2009

Physical Education (PE) teachers from 64 WA middle schools were interviewed during the 2007-08 school year. They answered questions about the quality and quantity of PE offered in their school and changes that have happened since their district developed a wellness policy. Positive changes were seen in PE curriculum development and fitness assessment. Few changes were noted in PE frequency or overall physical activity (PA) opportunities for students.

Requirement (Legislation) ¹	In Washington Schools
All students in grades 1-8 are required to complete an average of 100 instructional minutes per week in PE. (WAC 180-50-135) By 2010, all students in grades 1-8 should have at least 150 minutes of quality PE every week. (Senate Bill 5093 goal)	On average 7 th graders received 50 minutes of PE class per week.
PE and fitness curriculum includes a daily period of PA, a minimum of 20 minutes of which is aerobic activity in the student's target heart rate zone. (Senate Bill 5436)	During PE students participated in less than 7 minutes per day of aerobic activity.
By 2010, all student health and fitness instruction shall be conducted by appropriately certified instructors. (Senate Bill 5093 goal)	Approximately half of the schools required PE teachers to be certified, licensed or endorsed by the State.
Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, any district waiver or PE exemptions for high school students should be based upon meeting both health and fitness curricula concepts as well as alternative means of engaging in PA. (Senate Bill 5093 goal)	Almost none of the districts wellness policies restricted the use of waivers.
Policy includes goals for PA that are designed to promote student wellness in a manner that the local education agency determines is appropriate. (Federal Wellness Policy Requirement)	Almost all the districts wellness policies included goals for PA designed to promote student wellness.

Time Spent in PE in WA Middle Schools Compared to State Goals and Requirements



Opportunities for Action

Opportunities to be active at school can enhance health and academic achievement.²

- There are models for effective sequential PE curricula that promote PA for all children.
- Districts need resources to adopt best practices:
 - 150 minutes/wk PE for elementary students & 225 minutes/wk PE for middle school students
 - Teacher-student ratio for PE comparable to other classes
 - Specific amount of time devoted to moderate to vigorous activity in PE
 - Required qualifications for PE instructors
 - Required annual student health assessment (e.g., fitness or Body Mass Index [BMI])
 - Promotion of safe and active routes to school
 - Daily Elementary school recess

1. Senate Bill 5436, Senate Bill 5093, and the Federal Wellness Policy requirements are available on http://www.healthyschoolswa.org/wellness_policies/legislation.html
 2. J. Dilley, Research Review: School-based Health Interventions and Academic Achievement (2009), http://www.healthyschoolswa.org/data_tools/academics_health.html



