

Senate Bill 200
Support Emails
Office of Senator Mia Costello – District K

Dear Senator Mia Costello and Sorcha Hazelton,

As a physical educator of 18 years in Alaska, I was very excited to learn about the introduction of Senate Bill 200, addressing physical activity requirements for our students in K-8th grade. There is no doubt that physical activity helps students focus and learn better, helps reduce stress and fosters much needed social development and interaction. Unstructured physical activity plays a big part in this. I urge you to consider including required time in physical education as well. Many people, including 4th year education students who I teach in UAF's required Health and Physical Education for Classroom Teachers course, do not fully understand the difference between Physical Activity and Physical Education. They can easily be seen as one in the same by a bystander without closer inspection. Physical education provides the needed framework for learning and practicing motor skills and receiving meaningful feedback from a qualified physical educator. In order for our students to be safe and successful in other physically active environments, they need to have physical education to build these skills. Having required physical education will also increase their likelihood of engaging in more physical active opportunities that arise because they will have more confidence having tried a wide variety of skills in a safe, structured setting.

Our students need recess for unstructured play time as well, and I thank Senator Mia Costello for addressing this in Senate Bill 200. Alaska's youth depends on efforts like this one!

Thank you,
Kayla Clark
Woodriver Elementary School
Fairbanks Alaska

Good morning!

My name is Nancy Blake and I teach physical education at Goose Bay Elementary School in Wasilla. I am writing to thank Senator Costello for her efforts to increase the physical activity requirement to 54 minutes per day for our youth in Alaska elementary and middle schools. The research has consistently shown a positive relationship between brain development and physical activity throughout the lifespan, as well as the connection between academic performance and certain types of physical activity in our students. I am thankful to see that the supporters of Senate Bill 200 are moving this forward in our state.

When I began teaching PE in Alaska (more than 20 years ago), I was surprised to learn that there was no requirement for physical education in our schools with the exception of only 1 high school credit for health/PE. It is only recently, within the past five years, that Alaska has adopted statewide standards for physical education. We are moving forward, and this Senate bill is a positive step in that direction!

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Physical educators in schools across the state support the intent of this bill, and will be cheering when they learn of it. Currently over 200 Alaskan schools are participating in Healthy Futures, which is a statewide program that encourages students to “Get Out and Play” for 60 minutes a day. In addition, schools here in the Mat-Su Valley are fortunate to benefit from a strong partnership with the Mat-Su Health Foundation, which provides approximately \$150,000 in grant funds to support additional physical activity and healthful nutrition programs for our students.

While physical activity is important for our students (and for all of us adults, too!), I would like to remind the Senator that successful, meaningful, and safe participation in a wide variety of physical activities is learned through quality physical education instruction. Our students learn to kick, throw, strike, skip, roll, hop, catch, and many, many more motor skills in PE classes. They learn how their bodies work, and how to improve their fitness levels through assessment, goal-setting, and the creation of personal fitness plans. Students get the taste of competition, and experience the results of cooperation. They learn to strategize. They develop sportsmanship. They learn methods to problem-solve.

Then, these same students go outside and practice these skills, strategies, and behaviors during recess. This is how unstructured play time become meaningful in our children’s development.

As I get ready to leave for another day in the gym with my students, I hope you hear from many others who support the Senator’s efforts. I only recently learned of this bill, and I understand it will be heard in committee for the first time tomorrow. Please let me know how I can support this bill as it moves through the process.

Sincerely,

Nancy Blake

My name is Hyrum Neilson, I am a PE/Health teacher for the MatSu borough School District and I am in full support of the bill being presented. I have always believed a successful students is one that is active. Not only at recess and play time bu even more during Physical Education class where they learn so many different life skills as they improve on physical fitness. I see everyday in my classes the success of students being active and learning to be appropriate members of society as they learn to cope with frustrating situations and overcome obstacles that gives them new tools to win in their everyday trials.

I believe with this bill there will be even more support of getting students to the gym and allowing them to use their energy to learn and grow. An active student is a healthy student both in the classroom and out in society.

Hyrum Neilson

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Good Afternoon,

My name is Cindi Westcott and I teach physical education at Snowshoe Elementary School in Wasilla. I am writing to thank Senator Costello for her efforts to increase the physical activity requirement to 54 minutes per day for our youth in Alaska elementary and middle schools. The research has consistently shown a positive relationship between brain development and physical activity throughout the lifespan, as well as the connection between academic performance and certain types of physical activity in our students. Students who are physically active tend to have better grades, school attendance, cognitive performance and classroom behaviors. Increased time spent for physical education does not negatively affect students' academic achievement. I am thankful to see that the supporters of Senate Bill 200 are moving this forward in our state.

I recently attended the Healthy Schools Leadership Institute, sponsored by The American Cancer Society and The Centers for Disease Control Prevention National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division of Population Health School Health Branch in Atlanta, Georgia. During this highly informative conference I was able to collaborate with 17 other states with stakeholders ranging from classroom teachers, school board members, parents, principals, superintendents, and state department personnel. While there we discussed several evidences of success that support physical activity and academic performance.

When I began teaching PE in Alaska, I was surprised to learn that there was no requirement for physical education in our schools with the exception of only 1 high school credit for health/PE. It is only recently, within the past five years, that Alaska has adopted statewide standards for physical education. We are moving forward, and this Senate bill is a positive step in that direction!

Physical educators in schools across the state support the intent of this bill, and will be cheering when they learn of it. Currently over 200 Alaskan schools are participating in Healthy Futures, which is a statewide program that encourages students to "Get Out and Play" for 60 minutes a day. In addition, schools here in the Mat-Su Valley are fortunate to benefit from a strong partnership with the Mat-Su Health Foundation, which provides approximately \$150,000 in grant funds to support additional physical activity and healthful nutrition programs for our students.

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Then, these same students go outside and practice these skills, strategies, and behaviors during recess. This is how unstructured play time become meaningful in our children's development.

I hope you hear from many others who support the Senator's efforts. I only recently learned of this bill, and I understand it will be heard in committee for the first time tomorrow. Please let me know how I can support this bill as it moves through the process.

Sincerely,
Cindi M. Westcott
Snowshoe Elementary
Physical Education

Good afternoon,

I am writing in support of the intent and the goal of SB200. As an almost fully retired physical education teacher, having spent most of my career with the Anchorage School District and currently in my final semester with UAA teaching the methods of teaching physical education courses, I am thrilled that someone is finally recognizing the value of physical activity and physical education in the school day.

As physical educators, we have not taken advantage of opportunities such as this to define the differences between physical activity and physical education. I hope that you hear from physical educators who will explain some of those differences. While physical education may be associated with certification, curriculum, and credits – terms not implied in physical activity – it should also be associated with skill related and health related fitness concepts. Adding the term "physical education" in partnership with "physical activity" to this bill will help strengthen the stated goal of SB200.

Much research has been published in the past few years on the contribution physical activity makes to one's health and on the effects of movement on the brain. To see a bill introduced in the Alaska Legislature that recognizes that contribution to our children's life is tremendous, and I want to extend kudos to Senator Costello.

Please let me know if I can be of assistance as this bill moves through the legislative process. As you are probably aware, there is no one at the state level who's primary focus is physical

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education, so I am pleased that members of the SHAPE Alaska board were given notice of this bill and we will mobilize our members to get involved.

Yours in health and fitness,

Dorothy Orr

Good Morning,

Thank you so much for introducing and supporting SB 200. I have been teach high school physical education in the Mat Su Borough for 19 years. Throughout those years I have seen a serious decline in the amount of physical activity engaged in by high school students, serious decline in their fitness levels, and an increase in obesity. What I observe in Physical Education classes is that many students cannot demonstrate the very basic motor skills needed to participate in life long physical activity. Thus, many lack the motivation to even try. I'm sure you already have studied the research linking physical activity to increased brain function and improved academic achievement. I understand that SB 200 focuses on K-8 grade students and not high school students. K – 8 grade is the most important time for children to learn motor skills and to learn to love movement. This bill help improve motor skills, brain function and academic achievement for young students and in doing so, teach students to learn to love to move, how great it feels to be fit and active throughout high school and beyond.

Thank you. Senator Costello, for your support of our children in their most important developmental stage in their most basic developmental need. I look forward to following the progress of SB 200.

Sincerely,

Sue Allen
Physical Educator
Wasilla High School
Mat-Su Borough School District

Senators Dunleavy, Gardner, Giessel, Huggins, and Stevens –

Like most Alaskans, I believe our most important investment is in our youth.

For that reason, I strongly commend Senator Costello for introducing SB200, which would

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require school districts to provide students with 90% of the CDC recommended daily amount of 60 minutes of physical activity.

As the director of Healthy Futures – a program that partners with over 200 schools and 15,000 students statewide to help empower Alaska's youth to build the habit of daily physical activity - I've seen the positive impact in schools that incorporate extra physical activity into the students' school day and I've heard the testimonials from teachers, kids and parents alike.

Evidence-based research shows that healthy children are more likely to be successful students. According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion students who are physically active during the school day perform better academically, they demonstrate improved coping skills, and they learn critical socialization skills. Additionally, children who meet the CDC 60 minutes standard are at greatly reduced risk to develop childhood obesity. (Some quick facts below).

There are tremendous benefits to be realized from implementation of SB200 (increased academic performance, improved social functioning, decreased childhood obesity). Conversely there are continuing mounting public costs to be absorbed by doing nothing (underperforming educational system, health-care costs due to obesity and associated health risks).

SB200 is one of the most important pieces of legislation to be considered this year. Again, I encourage you to help pass the bill. SB200 makes business sense and it honors our commitment to our greatest resource – our youth.

Thank you,

Harlow

- Children are 20% more likely to earn an A in math or English when they have the chance to be active.¹
- Students' test scores jumped 6% in just three years after physical activity was incorporated into their school day.²
- Starting the school day with 10-20 minutes of teacher-led physical activity has been shown to decrease student discipline referrals by as much as 57% and decrease school nurse visits by 67%.³
- Children lower their insulin levels by 33% when they break up three hours of sedentary time with short, moderate intensity walking.⁴

1. *Active Living Research. [Active Kids Learn Better](#). Infographic. San Diego, CA: Active Living Research; 2015.*

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2. Active Living Research. [Active Kids Learn Better](#). Infographic. San Diego, CA: Active Living Research; 2015.
3. Whitt-Glover M, Porter A, Yancey T. [Do Short Physical Activity Breaks in Classrooms Work?](#) Research Brief. San Diego, CA: Active Living Research; 2013.
4. Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. [Short bouts of activity may offset lack of sustained exercise in kids](#). Washington, DC: National Institutes of Health; 2015.

*Harlow Robinson, Executive Director
Alaska Sports Hall of Fame
Healthy Futures*

Sorcha Hazelton and Ms. Costello,

Thank you for supporting SB 200! As a teacher and a coach I find it incredibly valuable to keep our students healthy through physical activity. At a time when our State and our country is suffering from high rates of obesity related diseases it is nice to know that some people in government care enough to fight for the health of our children. SB200 is good for creating a healthy future and for implementing more jobs in the State of Alaska. An increase in the amount of time students spend active will also lead to an increase in the number of qualified Physical Education Professionals and Coaches needed to teach those students, which is creating jobs for Alaskans and keeping dollars local. Thank you.

Recently, South High School started offering Yoga as one of our PE electives. The program has exploded with interest from students who want to be active. After the first year we added a second class because demand was so high, class sizes are routinely between 35-40 students. Our students want to be active, they want to move from the time they are young kindergartners to the time they graduate, adding an extra 54 minutes of activity will give them a chance to use their natural energy, oxygenate their brains (which will improve tests scores and memory) and decrease classroom interruptions. My yoga students frequently tell me how glad they are that they took a PE class and how much it has helped in other areas of their life. Here are a few quotes from students.

"I think yoga has made me more confident especially in the class because you can be in a room with a bunch of people and know you won't be judged." 14 year old freshman at South

"When I first joined Yoga, I saw it as an opportunity to just fill in that last gym credit I needed to graduate. But by the end of the year, I see that it's so much more than exercise. It's a whole lifestyle, from the exercise itself, to it's mental processes and teachings of clarity. I see that it's really something everyone should experience. It's really allowed me to keep my stress levels in check at school." 16 year old at South

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"I have learned to push my body because I am stronger than I think I am and I can do anything with enough practice." 15 year old South

"I have learned a lot from this class. I have learned many new ways to take care of myself and my body, and to avoid injury even in situations where I'm not doing yoga. I have learned all about the muscles of the body and how to stretch them. I have learned about the many ways that I can improve my own flexibility and strength. I think that this class also helped me be less self-conscious and more able to focus on improving myself. I really appreciate the opportunity I had to take this class." 17 year old at South.

The benefit of physical activity is incredible. I fully support SB 200 and thank Ms. Costello for fighting for the health of Alaska! If I can be of any service, please do not hesitate to ask.

Yours,
Shasta Miller, M. Ed
Physical Education Teacher
South Anchorage High School
