Alaska School Districts

Physical Education & Recess Policy Survey

March 2014

An Assessment of Alaska's 54 School Districts
Physical Education and Recess Policies

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Division of Public Health
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School Health Program

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND 1

Project Background 1
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 1
National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) 1
Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) 2
Key Concepts and Definitions 2
Implementation and This Project 2

OVERALL PROJECT METHODOLOGY 3

Alaska School Districts 3
Part I and II 5

PART I: ALASKA SCHOOL DISTRICT PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RECESS POLICY SURVEY 6

Survey Tool 6
Survey Sample 6
Repondents 6
Protocol 6
Survey Responses 7
Open-Ended Responses 23

PART II: WRITTEN PE/RECESS POLICY SCAN 27

Overview of Study Methods 27

POLICY ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION 30

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE POLICY ANALYSIS 30

CONCLUSION 33

APPENDICES 34

Appendix I: Suggested Questions for Future Policy Analysis 35
Appendix II: National and State PE Standards 36
Appendix III: Alaska PE and Recess Survey 37
Appendix IV: Works Cited 46

ASSOCIATED FILES PREPARED FOR CLIENT

User-Friendly Data Analysis Excel Spreadsheet
Written Policy Analysis Spreadsheet
PE and Recess Policies from 51 of 54 Alaska School Districts

Introduction and Background

PROJECT BACKGROUND

It is currently estimated that **Alaska spends $459 million on the direct medical healthcare costs related to obesity** alone. This does not include the additional costs of lost productivity and other indirect costs of obesity.

The purpose of Alaska's Division of Public Health Obesity Prevention and Control Program is to improve the health of Alaskans by reducing obesity through promoting healthy, active lifestyles and healthy nutrition. The statistics in Alaska are staggering; **67% of adults and 26% of high school students in Alaska are overweight or obese**.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the American Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) have provided states with evidence-based environmental strategies to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity and chronic disease risk factors and to increase the percentage of physically and mentally healthy youth through regular physical activity.

CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC)

The CDC conducted an extensive literature review of 50 studies that examined the relationship between physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance. Their analysis suggests there is substantial evidence that physical activity can lead to improved academic performance and academic behavior, and that increasing time dedicated to physical activity will not negatively impact student academic achievement (CDC, 2013).

In 2008, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) recommended school-age children and youth participate in **at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity. With 95% of youth in schools during the day, schools have a critical role** in providing students with the opportunity for movement and physical activity and to develop a lifetime of physical fitness and health.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SPORTS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (NASPE)

The National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) recommends schools focus on physical education programs that promote individual physical fitness and emphasize the skills and knowledge that students need to enjoy a healthy, physically active life. To meet that outcome, the **NASPE recommends 150 minutes each week of physical education at the elementary level and 225 minutes each week at the secondary level.**

CDC School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

In 2010 Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (Sec. 204 of P.L. 111-296) that added new provisions for districts to establish local wellness policies. Subsequently, the CDC School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity were adopted. The following four (4) relate to this project:

- Use a coordinated approach to develop, implement, and evaluate healthy eating and physical activity policies and practices.
- Establish school environments that support healthy eating and physical activity.
- **Implement a comprehensive physical activity program with quality physical education as the cornerstone.**
- Employ qualified persons, and provide professional development opportunities for physical education, health education, nutrition services, and health, mental health, and social services staff members, as well as staff members who supervise recess, cafeteria time, and out-of-school time.

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAM (CSPAP)

To assist schools and districts with development, implementation, and evaluation of their physical activities programs and to encourage students to accumulate the recommended 60 minutes per day of physical activity, the CDC, in collaboration with the AAHPERD, produced the Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP), which addresses five components:

1. Physical education
2. Physical activity during school (e.g., recess, physical activity breaks)
3. Physical activity before and after school (e.g., walk and/or bike to school programs, intramurals)
4. Staff involvement
5. Family and community engagement.

Quality indicators and environmental supports for each component (e.g., daily recess, qualified physical education teachers, adequate space and equipment, positive messages about physical activity) have been identified and can be assessed to assist schools in evaluating their physical activities programs.

KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Wellness Policies:

NOTE: Alaska's school district Wellness policies are typically located in the School Board Policy (BP) 5040 Student Nutrition and Physical Activity Section and may include implementation details in the Administrative Regulation (AR) 5040.

The Child Nutrition and Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004 required schools participating in federal school meal programs to have an established local school Wellness Policy in place by the 2006-2007 school year. The 2010 Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act added new provisions for Wellness Policies. The Wellness Policy must be a collaborative effort between parents, students, the school board and administration, school food authorities, and the public. The policies must address six components:

- Nutrition guidelines for all foods available at school
- Assurances that school meal guidelines are not less restrictive than federal requirements
- Goals for nutrition education
- Goals for physical activity
- Goals for other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness
- A plan for monitoring policy implementation.

Alaska and National PE Standards:

The Standards for Physical Education identifies the knowledge and skills a physically literate person should know and be able to do at all grade levels. The Alaska Physical Education Standards (2010) are based on the National PE Standards. These standards can be found in Appendix II.

Physical Activity:

Bodily movement of any type that may include recreational, fitness and sports activities, as well as daily activities, such as walking to school or sweeping the floor.

Physical Education:

A quality PE program provides students with an opportunity to learn, appropriate instruction, and includes meaningful and challenging content for all children.

Recess:

A supervised time during the school day for students to be physically active.

Alaska Teacher Endorsement in Physical Education:

The State of Alaska does not require middle or high school PE teachers to have a PE endorsement to teach PE, but some districts do require it. Teachers certified in elementary education are automatically certified to teach elementary PE.

IMPLEMENTATION AND THIS PROJECT

This project establishes a baseline of PE and recess policies in Alaska's 54 school districts. Until now, a comprehensive collection and review of Alaska's policies has not occurred. This report provides a first step toward better understanding Alaska's policies and practices, and identifies key areas of interest for future analysis.

The survey questions were established through a state-led committee process and refined by thoroughly vetting each question by subject matter experts at the state level. The survey targeted questions about school district policies for physical education and recess at the K-12 levels.

Overall Project Methodology

ALASKA'S SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Alaska has approximately 500 public schools which are organized within 53 school districts. Additionally, Alaska has one state-sponsored secondary boarding school which is also considered a district, Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS), located in Sitka, Alaska.

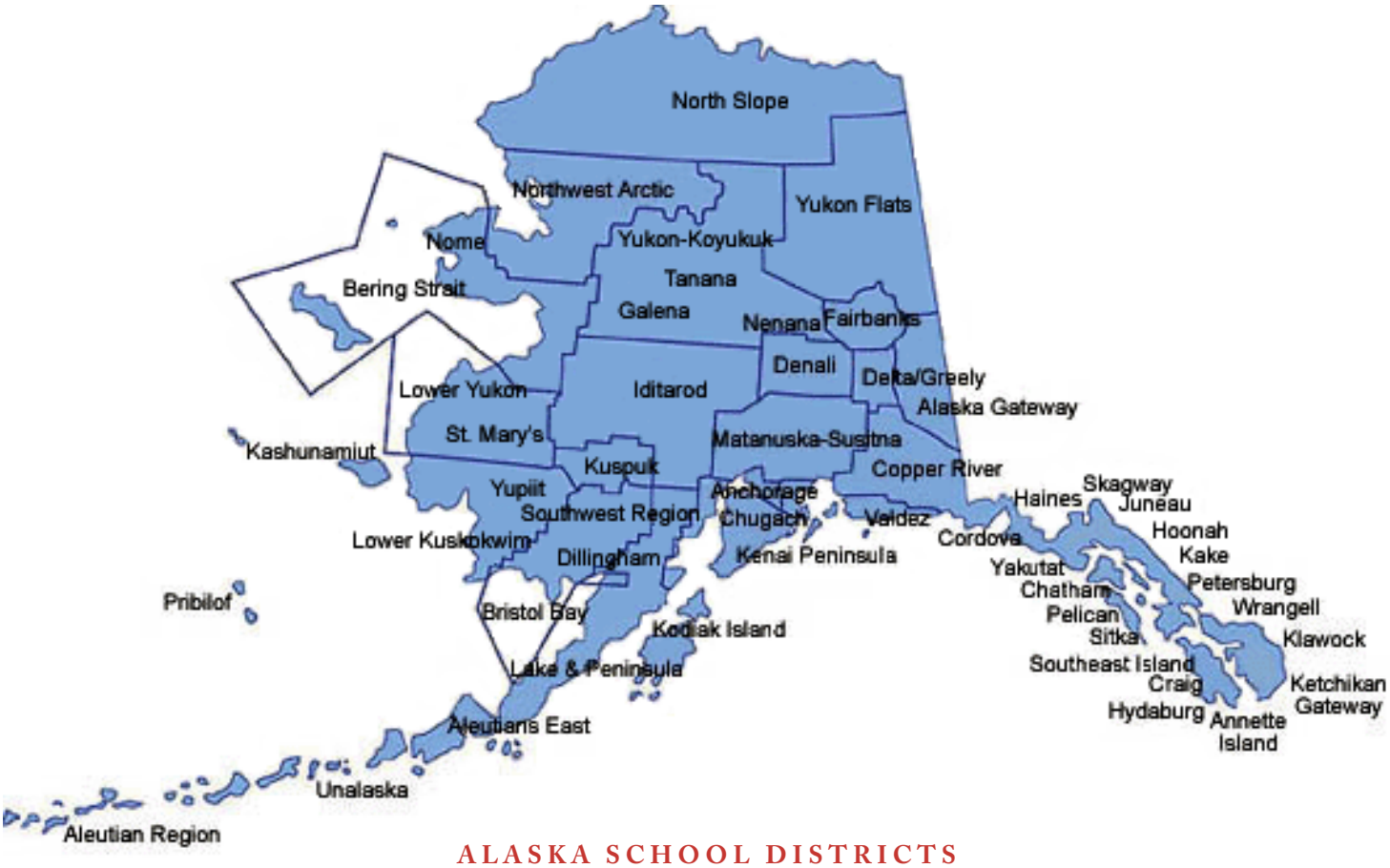
Diversity and Geography

School districts in the state vary greatly in size and location. Pelican City School District is the state's smallest district, serving 13 students in FY 2013-2014. The largest school district in the state is Anchorage School District, with an enrollment of 47,583 K-12 students in FY 2013-2014.

Schools in other urban areas such as Juneau, Fairbanks, the Kenai Peninsula, or the Matanuska-Susitna Valley are similar to schools in small cities in the rest of the United States.

Many schools in rural areas are small, some with 20 or fewer students at a variety of grade levels. They may be many miles from population centers and services, and accessible only by aircraft or boat. In remote villages, schools often serve as centers of community activity.

Understanding the diversity of Alaska's school district sizes and geography is important when considering how school districts function in providing education across the state, and how PE and recess fits into the picture.



ALASKA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

2014 ENROLLMENT AND NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN ALASKA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

A Two Part Process

Two policy analyses were conducted independently. The results from each effort are analyzed, compared and summarized in this report.

PART I

A survey instrument was developed and **implemented to all 54 school districts in Alaska.** The survey questions were established through a state-led committee process and refined by thoroughly vetting each question by subject matter experts at the state level. The survey targeted questions about school district policies for physical education and recess at the K-12 levels.

PART II

Concurrently, copies of school district policies were collected and analyzed. A policy analysis was conducted using the Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) 2013 evaluation methodology. The RWJ scoring methodology provided a framework to quantitatively analyze school district Wellness Policies.

PART 1 Alaska School District PE and Recess Policy Survey

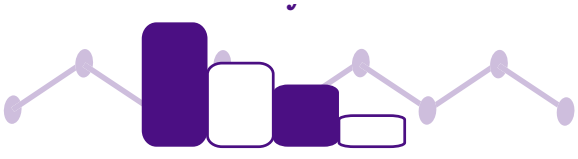
SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION

- 29 Responses by phone
- 20 Responses by web
- 5 Responses by e-mail

54/54 RESPONDED

ANALYSIS

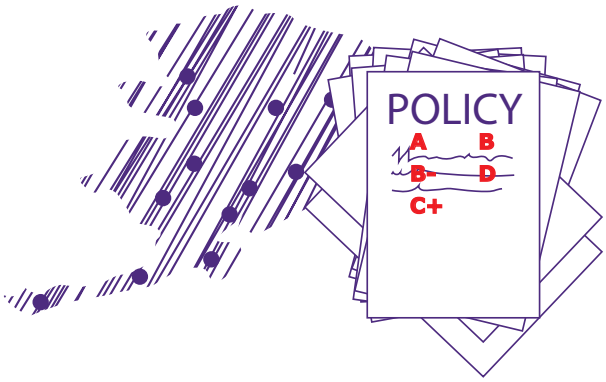


The survey establishes a baseline documentation of how Alaska school districts are implementing PE and recess policies

PART 2 Alaska School District Written PE and Recess Policy Collection & Analysis

POLICY COLLECTION

51 Policies Collected statewide



POLICY SCORING

Collected policies were scored against RWJ scoring methodology

ANALYSIS

The policy collection and analysis provides a baseline to evaluate and monitor Alaska PE and recess policies in the future

Part I: Alaska School District PE and Recess Policy Survey

SURVEY TOOL

A list of survey questions was developed by a state-led committee process. Each question was designed to address an existing policy question as it relates to school district written policies and practices. The survey targeted questions about school district policies for physical education and recess at the K-12 levels in Alaska.

An online survey tool was developed which surveyors used to collect responses via telephone. It was later provided electronically to those nonresponsive to phone calls. The online survey populated a spreadsheet of responses which were then analyzed.

SURVEY SAMPLE

The survey sample consisted of all 54 school districts in the State of Alaska. The goal of 100% response rate was met.

NOTE: Mt. Edgecumbe High School, the 54th district, was included in the survey sample. However, none of the elementary or middle school questions are relevant to the policies and practices at this school because it is a state sponsored boarding school for secondary students only. Questions about elementary and middle school policies and practices, therefore, only have 53 respondents.

RESPONDENTS

The survey was intended for the superintendent of each district, and 18 of the respondents were district superintendents. Frequently, however, the surveyors were directed to someone else in the district who was most knowledgeable about the PE and recess policies there. This person ranged in position from Executive Secretary, Wellness Coordinator, PE Teacher or Head Teacher to Principal, Curriculum Director or Assistant Superintendent.

This variety reflects the diversity of size and composition of Alaska's school districts. Some districts have superintendents off site, so connecting the surveyors to someone with feet on the ground in the school was important for capturing practices as well as policies. For some single-site districts, the superintendent is also the principal and a classroom teacher, so they were well attuned to both policies and practices. In districts where many individuals are knowledgeable about the PE and recess policies and practices, the surveyors were able to connect with whomever was available. For example, if the superintendent was traveling, the assistant superintendent or the superintendent secretary was able to complete the survey. Ultimately, the surveyors connected with a knowledgeable individual in all 54 of Alaska's school districts and the data in this report reflects 100% of the survey sample.

PROTOCOL

Initial surveys were conducted via telephone. The decision to conduct phone surveys was based on the desire to collect qualitative information through this process, and due to a concern that some questions may need further explanation. After two weeks of phone calls, email surveys were offered with follow up calls made. Late in the process, nonresponsive school districts were contacted by DHSS staff to assist with responsiveness.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Due to the fact that many school districts have written policies but do not have the minutes for PE or Recess in their policy, questions 1-9 and 12-17 were structured in three stages to determine if actual minutes were in the written policy.

Due to the fact that many school districts have written policies but do not have the minutes for PE or Recess in their policy, questions 1-9 were structured in 3 stages to determine if actual minutes were in the written policy.

Question 1 : Written PE Policies - Elementary School

DOES YOUR DISTRICT HAVE A WRITTEN POLICY REQUIRING PE AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL?

a. *Yes*	28	53%
b. *No, but we have an unwritten policy*	20	38%
c. *No policy at all*	5	9%
Total Result	53	100%

RESULTS

More than half of the schools in the state of Alaska do have a policy requiring PE at the elementary school level. The majority of the remaining schools have an unwritten policy, with PE as part of the school curriculum even though there is no written policy. Only 9% of all the schools in the State of Alaska have neither a formal nor an informal policy for elementary PE.

BACKGROUND

The State of Alaska does not require PE at the elementary level. However, 43 other states mandate that students must take elementary PE (NASPE & AHA, 2012).

Individual districts may have written PE policies, often as a part of their Wellness Policy, a required provision of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 for schools participating in federal school meal programs. These policies are typically located in "Board Policy (BP) 5040 section Student Nutrition and Physical Activity Section" and accompanying implementation details in the "Administrative Regulation (AR) 5040".

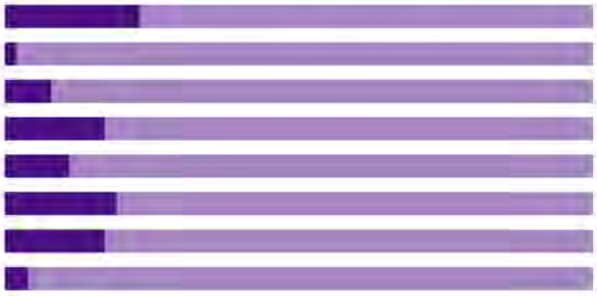
The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD), in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), advocates all schools implement a Comprehensive School Physical Activities Program (CSPAP) in an effort to help more students meet national physical activities guidelines and provide accountability for the programs they provide (2013).

Question 2 : PE Time per Week - Elementary School

NOTE: Surveys given over the phone were able to capture the number of minutes provided in practice as well as in policy. The online survey respondents did not always relay that information. The results of this question reflect both of those situations.

HOW MUCH TIME PER WEEK DOES YOUR PE POLICY PROVIDE FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL?

a. *No PE time is required by the policy*	12	23%
b. *Up to 30 minutes per week*	1	2%
c. *Between 31-60 minutes per week*	4	8%
d. *Between 61-90 minutes per week*	9	17%
e. *Between 91-120 minutes per week*	6	11%
f. *Between 121-150 minutes per week*	10	19%
g. *Over 150 minutes per week*	9	17%
h. *Other*	2	4%
Total Result	53	100%



RESULTS

About a quarter (23%) of the school districts in Alaska have no PE time required by their policy (or no PE policy at all). Nine (9) districts provide more than 150 minutes of PE per week to their elementary students. Most school districts provided at least 30 minutes of PE per week. Most of the districts that responded "Other" did so because the amount of minutes provided in their district varied based on location.

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) recommends that school-age children and youth should participate in **60 minutes or more of daily**, moderate to vigorous physical activity (NASPE, 2004, USDHHS & USDA, 2005). Schools can help students meet these national requirements by providing high quality physical education, in addition to other physical activity opportunities throughout the day.

The CDC and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) recommend schools provide **150 minutes per week** of physical education for elementary students.

Question 3 : Minutes in Written PE Policy - Elementary School

ARE THE MINUTES IN YOUR WRITTEN POLICY?

a. *Yes*	16	30%
b. *No*	35	66%
c. *I don't know*	2	4%
Total Result	53	100%

RESULTS

Two thirds of the school districts did not have the number of minutes they provided PE included in their policy. A few respondents (4%) were not sure if their policy listed the number of minutes of PE provided.

Question 4 : Written PE Policy - Middle School

DOES YOUR DISTRICT HAVE A WRITTEN POLICY REQUIRING PE AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL?

a. *Yes*	28	53%
b. *No, but we have an unwritten policy*	16	30%
c. *No policy at all*	7	13%
d. *I don't know*	2	4%
Total Result	53	100%

RESULTS

Similar to the responses for elementary schools, 53% of districts have a policy requiring PE at the middle school level. Another third of the districts have an unwritten policy, meaning they most likely provide some amount of PE time each week. Less than 20% of the school districts in Alaska do not have a PE policy for middle school or the survey respondent did not know if their district had a PE policy.

BACKGROUND

Physical education is not required by the State of Alaska at the middle school level, although 41 other states mandate it (NASPE & AHA, 2012).

Question 5 : PE Time per Week - Middle School

NOTE: Surveys given over the phone were able to capture the number of minutes provided in practice as well as in policy. The online survey respondents did not always relay that information. The results of this question reflect both of those situations.

HOW MUCH TIME PER WEEK DOES YOUR PE POLICY PROVIDE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLS?

a. No PE time is required by the policy	11	21%
b. Between 31-60 minutes per week	1	2%
c. Between 61-90 minutes per week	3	6%
d. Between 91-120 minutes per week	5	9%
e. Between 121-150 minutes per week	7	13%
f. Between 151-180 minutes per week	3	6%
g. Between 181-225 minutes per week	5	9%
h. Over 225 minutes per week	17	32%
i. Other	1	2%
Total Result	53	100%

RESULTS

Of the school districts, 21% of school districts had no set amount of PE time required by their policy. Almost a third (32%) of districts provided over 225 minutes of PE per week. Of those districts, most provided 50-60 minutes per day of PE. The rest of the districts were relatively evenly distributed among the number of minutes of PE they provided per week, ranging from 30 to 225 minutes.

BACKGROUND

The CDC and NASPE recommend middle school students receive **225 minutes** of instructional physical education per week for the entire school year.

Question 6 : Minutes in Written PE Policy - Middle School

ARE THE MINUTES IN YOUR WRITTEN POLICY?

a. Yes	12	23%
b. No	40	75%
c. I don't know	1	2%
Total Result	53	100%

RESULTS

Three quarters (75%) of school districts did not have the number of minutes they provided PE written into their written policy. Almost a quarter (23%) did have the minutes per week written in their policy. A few respondents did not know.

Question 7 : Written PE Policy - High School

DOES YOUR DISTRICT HAVE A WRITTEN POLICY REQUIRING PE AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL?

a. *Yes*	46	85%
b. *No, but we have an unwritten policy*	6	11%
c. *No policy at all*	2	4%
Total Result	54	100%

RESULTS

Unlike elementary and middle school PE policies, 85% of districts require PE at the high school level. An additional 11% have an unwritten policy, with PE provided for the students but not included in a written policy. Only two districts (4%) did not have any PE policy at the high school level.

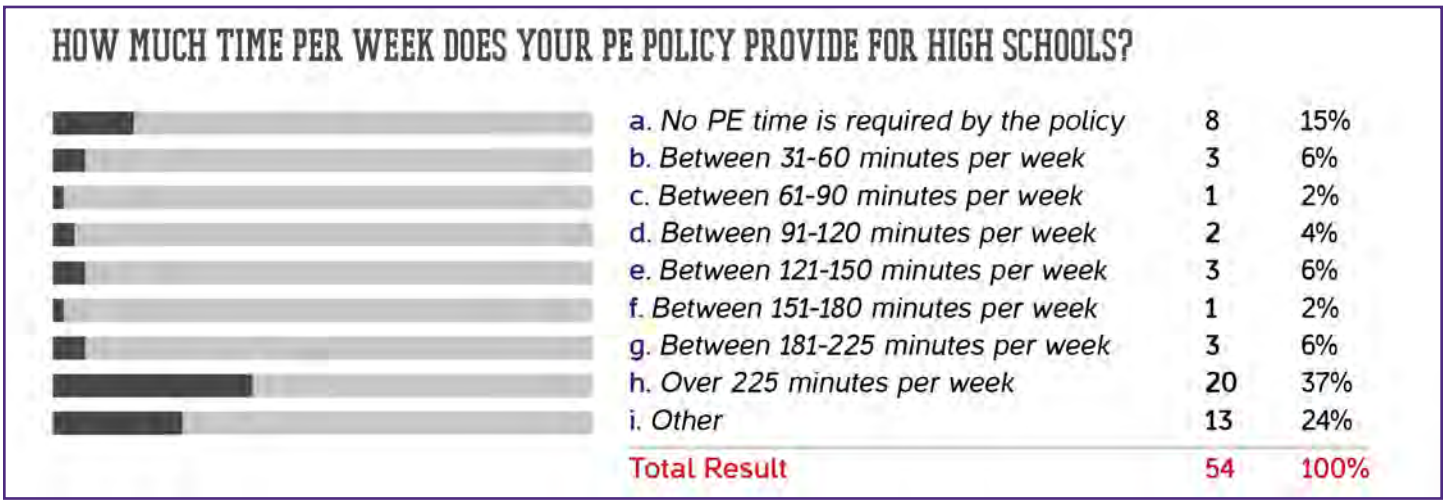
BACKGROUND

The State of Alaska does not require PE at the high school level. However, there is a requirement that students must complete one credit of EITHER health OR physical education or 1/2 credit each in order to graduate from high school. Forty-four (44) states mandate PE for high school and forty (40) states require high school students to take PE to graduate (NASPE & AHA, 2012).

Question 8 : PE Time per Week - High School

NOTE: Surveys given over the phone were able to capture the number of minutes provided in practice as well as in policy. This online survey respondents did not always relay that information. The results of this question reflect both of those situations.

RESULTS



a. No PE time is required by the policy	8	15%
b. Between 31-60 minutes per week	3	6%
c. Between 61-90 minutes per week	1	2%
d. Between 91-120 minutes per week	2	4%
e. Between 121-150 minutes per week	3	6%
f. Between 151-180 minutes per week	1	2%
g. Between 181-225 minutes per week	3	6%
h. Over 225 minutes per week	20	37%
i. Other	13	24%
Total Result	54	100%

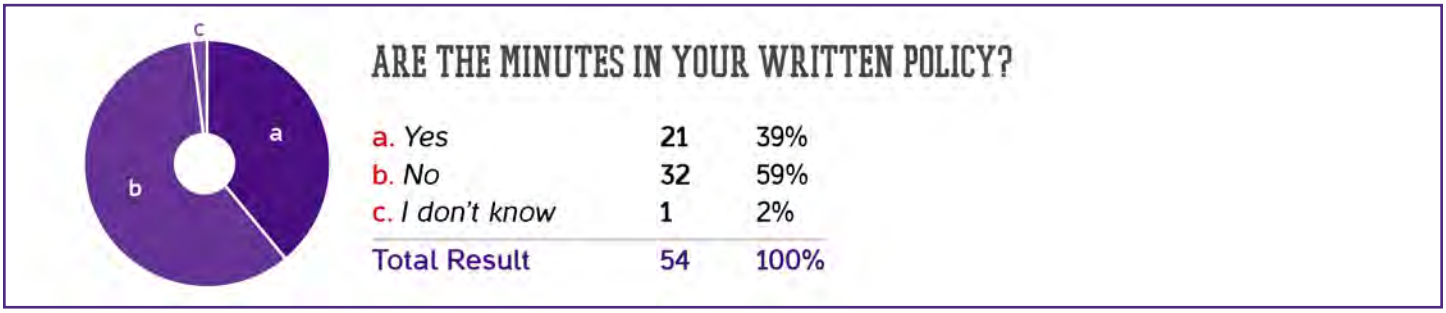
Of the school districts, 37% provide over 225 minutes of PE per week. Many districts have middle and high school grades combined, which is displayed in the similarity of spread among districts providing between 30 to 225 minutes per week of PE for middle as well as high schools. Almost a quarter (24%) of respondents fell in the "Other"category for this question, the majority of which answered with the amount of credits required for graduation rather than the number of minutes per week the students would receive PE.

BACKGROUND

The CDC and NASPE recommend high school students receive **225 minutes** of instructional physical education per week for the entire school year.

Question 9 : Minutes in Written PE Policy - High School

RESULTS



a. Yes	21	39%
b. No	32	59%
c. I don't know	1	2%
Total Result	54	100%

The vast majority of districts require PE at the high school level, but only 39% have a specific number of minutes written into their policy. Results show 59% do not include the number of minutes of PE per week in their written policy. One respondent (2%) did not know if their written policy had minutes included.

Question 10 : Policy on Withholding PE or Recess

IS THERE A WRITTEN PE POLICY FOR YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT THAT PROHIBITS THE EXCLUSION OF STUDENTS FROM PHYSICAL EDUCATION OR RECESS FOR BAD BEHAVIOR OR FAILURE TO COMPLETE CLASS WORK IN ANOTHER CLASS?

a. *Yes*	14	26%
b. *No, but there is an unwritten policy*	6	11%
c. *No policy at all*	34	63%
Total Result	54	100%

RESULTS

Over a quarter of districts (26%) did have a policy requiring that students be allowed to go to PE and recess, and could not be excluded for behavior or academic reasons. An additional 11% of Alaska school districts had an unwritten policy that aligned with this concept. Of the 54 school districts, 63% responded that they did not have a policy like this at all. This question may not have been completely clear to respondents, due to the double negative wording. The surveyors only found a small number of school districts that said this might occur from time to time in their schools.

BACKGROUND

NASPE issued a position statement that states "Administering or withholding physical activity as a form of punishment and/or behavior management is an inappropriate practice" (2009). A student's perception of physical activity should be positive and not related to a disciplinary consequence or have a negative connotation. Additionally, the opportunity for physical activity should not be viewed as a reward, rather a "necessary education support component for all children" and should not be denied or used as punishment (NASPE, 2006).

The American Academy of Pediatrics also recognizes the importance of participation in physical activity and its direct relationship to students' cognitive, social, emotional, and physical wellbeing, and as such, "should not be withheld for punitive or academic reasons" (2013).

Question 11 : Implementation of Written PE Policies

NOTE: Survey participants were given the response options of "None of the schools, Some of the schools, Most/all of the schools" before answering.

ARE ALL OF THE WRITTEN PE POLICIES BEING IMPLEMENTED?

a. *PE policies are being implemented at MOST or ALL schools.*	44	81%
b. *PE policies are being implemented at SOME schools.*	2	4%
c. *PE Policies are not being implemented at any schools.*	3	6%
d. *I don't know*	3	6%
e. *Other*	2	4%
Total Result	54	100%

RESULTS

All but 10 of the school districts in Alaska (81%) responded that their PE policies are being implemented in most or all of the schools in their district. The three schools that said PE policies were not being implemented in any of the schools in their district did so because they did not have written PE policies. Seven districts reported "I don't know" or "Other".

Due to the fact that many school districts have written policies but do not have the minutes for PE or Recess in their policy, questions 12-17 were structured in 3 stages to determine if actual minutes were in the written policy.

Question 12 : Written Recess Policy - Elementary School

DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE A WRITTEN POLICY REQUIRING RECESS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS?

a. *Yes*	17	*32%*
b. *No, but we have an unwritten policy*	26	*49%*
c. *No policy at all*	10	*19%*
Total Result	53	100%

RESULTS

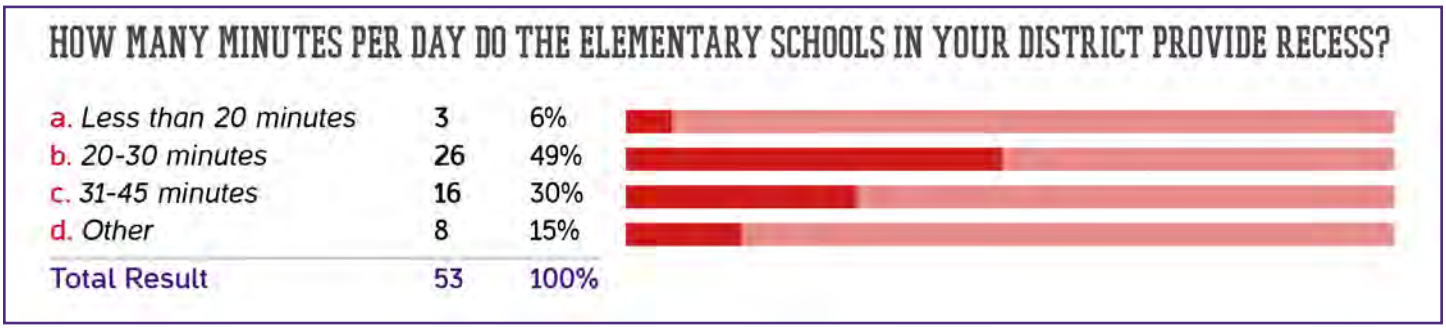
Almost one third (32%) of school districts have a written policy requiring recess for elementary schools. Further, 26 schools (49%) have an unwritten policy for elementary school recess, and 19% of Alaska school districts do not have any policy at all regarding recess for elementary schools.

BACKGROUND

In addition to high quality physical education, students need additional opportunities during the school day to meet the national guidelines of 60 minutes per day of physical activity. Physical activity during the school day can increase student concentration and engagement, as well as improve classroom behavior (USDHHS, 2010, CSPAP 2013). Unstructured time allocated for daily recess gives students an opportunity to practice the skills learned in physical education classes, practice personal and social responsibility, and enjoy being physically active. Several organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP, 2013), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1998), and the American Alliance For Health and Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD, 2013) recognize the critical importance of recess in a child's physical, social, and academic development.

The State of Alaska does not have a policy requiring or recommending recess or physical activity breaks at any grade level.

Question 13 : Recess Time per Day - Elementary School



RESULTS

About half (49%) of districts provide between 20-30 minutes of recess daily. This is often broken up into two 15-minute breaks, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Further, 30% of districts provide 31-45 minutes daily. Of the eight (8) districts that indicated "Other," two provide 50-60 minutes of recess for elementary schools daily.

BACKGROUND

NASPE recommends that elementary children should be provided with at least 20 minutes of daily recess. Recess should not replace physical education opportunities. Physical education is an opportunity for structured, sequential instruction designed to enhance student skills, knowledge and fitness. Recess is an unstructured time for students to engage in physical activity

Question 14 : Minutes in Written Recess Policy - Elementary School

RESULTS

The majority (83%) of districts do not have specific minutes written in their recess policy. Nine (9) districts (17%) do specify minutes per day of recess in their policy.

Question 15 : Written Recess Policy - Middle School

DOES YOUR DISTRICT HAVE A WRITTEN POLICY REQUIRING RECESS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLS?

a. *Yes*	3	6%
b. *No, but we have an unwritten policy*	30	57%
c. *No policy at all*	19	36%
d. *I don't know*	1	2%
Total Result	53	100%

RESULTS

Almost two-thirds (33) school districts either have a written or unwritten recess policy for middle schools. Three (3) schools were written, and thirty (30) schools were unwritten. Further, 36% of school districts (19) have no policy at all.

BACKGROUND

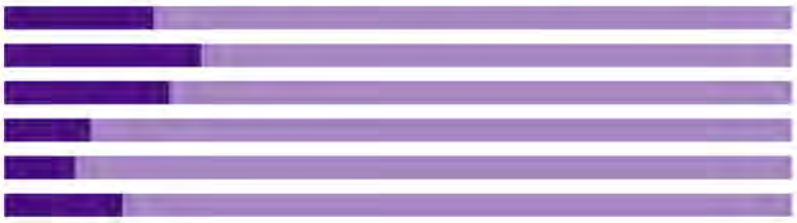
Students at the middle school level also benefit from daily physical activity provided during the school day (CSPAP, 2013). Schools can increase secondary students' physical activity by providing space, facilities, equipment, and time that makes participation appealing. It is possible at the middle and high school level that schools may provide scheduled physical activity breaks that take the form of an extended lunchtime or an "open gym" for students, or physical activity breaks during block schedule classes (CSPAP, 2013; AAHPERD, 2013).

At the middle/high school levels, the state does not have a policy or recommendation for recess or activity breaks.

Question 16 : Recess Time per Day - Middle School

HOW MANY MINUTES PER DAY DO THE MIDDLE SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT PROVIDE RECESS?

a. *None*	10	19%
b. *Less than 20 minutes*	13	25%
c. *20-30 minutes*	11	21%
d. *31-45 minutes*	6	11%
e. *I don't know*	5	9%
f. *Other*	8	15%
Total Result	53	100%



RESULTS

The recess time provided for middle schools is generally less than that for elementary schools. Ten (10) districts (19%) provide no recess time for middle schools. Further, 25% of districts (13) provide less than twenty (20) minutes of recess a day, and 21% (11) provide 20-30 minutes per day of recess for middle schools. Some districts that had K-8 schools provided more recess time for middle schools because of the overall school schedule.

Question 17 : Minutes in Written Recess Policy - Middle School

ARE THE MINUTES IN YOUR WRITTEN POLICY?

a. *Yes*	2	4%
b. *No*	51	96%
Total Result	53	100%

RESULTS

Of the 53 districts with middle schools in the State of Alaska, only two have specific minutes of daily recess for middle schools written into their policy. The remaining 51 (96%) do not.

Question 18 : Recess Separate from Lunch - Elementary School

DO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT SCHEDULE RECESS AS A SEPARATE AND DISTINCT TIME FROM LUNCH?

a. *Yes*	41	77%
b. *No*	10	19%
c. *I don't know*	2	4%
Total Result	53	100%

RESULTS

More than three quarters of the districts in Alaska schedule recess as a separate and distinct time from lunch. Ten (21%) districts do not schedule recess and lunch separately, and two (4%) respondents did not know.

Question 19 : Implementation of Written Recess Policies

NOTE: Survey participants were given the response options of "None of the schools, Some of the schools, Most/all of the schools, I don't know, or Other" before answering.

ARE ALL OF THE WRITTEN RECESS POLICIES BEING IMPLEMENTED?

a. *Recess policies are being implemented in MOST or ALL schools.*	38	72%
b. *Recess Policies are being implemented in SOME schools.*	1	2%
c. *Recess Policies are not being implemented in any schools.*	8	15%
d. *I don't know.*	4	8%
e. *Other*	2	4%
Total Result	53	100%

RESULTS

Of the 54 school districts, 38 (72%) are implementing recess policies in most/all of their schools and 15% of districts (8) are not implementing recess policies in any of their schools. Like PE policies, this is generally because the district does not have a recess policy to implement.

Question 20 : High School Credits for Graduation

HOW MANY HIGH SCHOOL CREDITS DOES YOUR DISTRICT REQUIRE IN PE FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION?

a. *None*	1	2%
b. *.5 credits*	8	15%
c. *1 credit*	28	52%
d. *1.5 credits*	8	15%
e. *2 credits*	4	7%
f. *Other*	5	9%
Total Result	54	100%

RESULTS

More than half (52%) of Alaska school districts require one (1) credit of PE for high school graduation and twelve (12) districts (22%) require 1.5 or 2 credits, more than the state standard. Eight (8) districts (15%) require .5 credits. The districts where the respondent did not differentiate between PE and Health requirements in their answer were placed in the "Other" category (5 districts/9%).

BACKGROUND

The State of Alaska requires students to complete one credit in EITHER health OR physical education OR 1/2 credit each to graduate from high school (04 ACC 06.075). Districts may have additional graduation requirements.

Question 21 : National and Alaska PE Curriculum Standards

DOES YOUR DISTRICT CURRICULUM FOLLOW THE ALASKA PE STANDARDS AND/OR NATIONAL PE STANDARDS?

a. *Yes*	46	85%
b. *We do not have an established PE curriculum*	3	6%
c. *I don't know*	5	9%
Total Result	54	100%

RESULTS

The majority of school districts (85%) follow the Alaska and National PE standards for their curriculum. A few districts do not have an established PE curriculum (6%), and a few respondents did not know (9%).

BACKGROUND

The Alaska Physical Education Standards (2010) are based on the national standards. The National Standards for Physical Education (NASPE, 2014) identifies the knowledge and skills a physically literate person should know and be able to do.

Question 22 : Professional Development

DO PE TEACHERS IN YOUR DISTRICT RECEIVE REGULAR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION?

a. *Yes*	18	33%
b. *No*	34	63%
c. *I don't know*	1	2%
d. *Other*	1	2%
Total Result	54	100%

RESULTS

Of the 54 school districts, 63% (34) responded that their PE teachers do not receive regular professional development in this area. One third of the districts (18) indicated that their PE teachers do receive regular professional development. Of the districts that have PE teachers who do not receive regular professional development, many are in very rural areas and regular professional development is cost prohibitive. The topic of professional development was raised often in the two open-ended questions at the end of the survey.

BACKGROUND

Professional development in the area of Physical Education enables qualified staff to improve current skills and acquire new ones (CDC Guidelines), resulting in increased student achievement. Several Alaskan stakeholders collaborated on the Alaska School Health and Safety Framework (2011) that recognizes the value of improving PE instruction by providing professional development to both formally trained and untrained physical educators. The State of Alaska does not require professional development for physical educators.

Question 23 : Elementary Teachers

ARE ALL ELEMENTARY PE CLASSES TAUGHT BY CERTIFIED TEACHERS AND NOT TEACHER AIDES OR PARAPROFESSIONALS?

a. *Yes*	44	83%
b. *No*	7	13%
c. *I don't know*	2	4%
Total Result	53	100%

RESULTS

Most school districts (83%) have elementary PE classes taught by certified elementary teachers. Seven districts (13%) do not have elementary classes taught by certified elementary teachers. Generally these were very rural districts with small schools, where PE could not be offered if a certified teacher had to teach.

BACKGROUND

Alaska Elementary Teacher certification includes the certification to teach PE. The CDC Guidelines state that schools should:

"Employ qualified persons, and provide professional development opportunities for physical education…as well as staff members who supervise recess."

Question 24 : PE Endorsement of Middle and High School PE Teachers

ARE MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL PE TEACHERS IN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT REQUIRED TO BE ENDORSED BY THE STATE IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION?

a. *Yes*	12	22%
b. *No*	36	67%
c. *I don't know*	3	6%
d. *Other*	3	6%
Total Result	54	100%

RESULTS

Similar to the previous question, the feedback from the survey was that most districts would not be able to offer PE if the teacher was required to be endorsed by the state in physical education. Thirty-six districts (67%) did not require the PE endorsement and 22% of districts (12) are able to require PE endorsement.

BACKGROUND

"According to the 2010 Shape of the Nation report, 39 states require all who teach PE in elementary schools to be certified or licensed, 42 states require this for all who teach PE in middle schools, and 46 states require this for all who teach PE in high school" (NASPE, 2010).

The State of Alaska does not require middle or high school PE teachers to have a PE endorsement to teach PE.

Questions 25 : PE Waivers, Exemptions and Substitutions

DOES YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT ALLOW WAIVERS, EXEMPTIONS, OR SUBSTITUTIONS TO REPLACE REQUIRED PE TIME OTHER THAN FOR MEDICAL REASONS?

a. *Yes*	27	50%
b. *No*	24	44%
c. *I don't know*	3	6%
Total Result	54	100%

RESULTS

There is a close split for responses to this question. Half of Alaska school districts (27) do allow waivers, exemptions, or substitutions, while 44% of the districts (24) do not. Many of the districts that do not allow for exemptions or the respondents that answered "I don't know" have never been in a situation where waivers, exemptions, or substitutions were requested or needed.

BACKGROUND

The NASPE position statement states "all K-12 students should take required physical education courses and that no substitutions, waivers, or exemptions should be permitted" (NASPE, 2006). PE programs follow a progression of knowledge and skills and prepare students to meet specific standards, which differs from physical activities. The content of a comprehensive, standards-based PE program cannot be fulfilled without participation in such a program.

Question 26 : Circumstances for PE Waivers, Exemptions and Substitution

NOTE: This was a follow-up question to Question 25. Survey respondents were allowed to choose more than one option.

IF YES, WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES ARE CONSIDERED FOR APPROVING WAIVERS, EXEMPTIONS OR SUB STITUTIONS TO REPLACE REQUIRED PE TIME?

Extracurricular activities	25
Correspondence School	5
Substituting other class work	2
Student's Preference	2
Other	3

RESULTS

The majority of districts that consider waivers, exemptions, or substitutions primarily do so for extracurricular activities (25 of 27 districts). Generally, the district allowing the exemption for extracurricular activities would have a formula for the number of PE credits a specific number of sports semesters would replace. Correspondence School is considered by five (5) districts. Substituting other classwork, student's preference, and a few other situations were considered by a handful of districts as well.

The State of Alaska does not prohibit using waivers, exemptions, or substitutions for replace PE time.

Question 27 : PE Facilities

IS THERE AN INDOOR FACILITY DEDICATED TO PE OTHER THAN A MULTIPURPOSE ROOM/CAFETRIA IN ALL THE SCHOOLS IN YOUR DISTRICT?

a. *MOST or ALL of the schools have an indoor facility dedicated to PE other than a multipurpose room/cafeteria.*	39	72%
b. *SOME of the schools have an indoor facility dedicated to PE other than a multipurpose room/cafeteria.*	11	20%
c. *None of the schools have an indoor facility dedicated to PE other than a multipurpose room/cafeteria.*	4	7%
Total Result	54	100%

RESULTS

Results show 39 districts (72%) have a facility dedicated to PE other than a multipurpose room/cafeteria in most/all the schools in their district. Further, 11 districts (20%) have a facility in some of their schools, and 4 districts (7%) have no facility dedicated to PE other than a multipurpose room/cafeteria.

Question 28 : PE and Recess Challenges

NOTE: This was an open-ended question, and therefore responses often fell into more than one category.

ARE THERE CHALLENGES TO PROVIDING QUALITY PE OR RECESS TO STUDENTS IN YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT?

a. *Staffing*	18
b. *Scheduling*	15
c. *No*	11
d. *Weather*	10
e. *Facility*	8
f. *Equipment*	6
g. *Funding*	6
h. *Professional Development*	6
i. *Other*	3

RESULTS

Of the open-ended responses, most focused on staffing, scheduling, weather and facilities as the major obstacles to providing quality PE and recess. Other challenges that came up more than once included equipment, funding, and professional development. ***Almost all of the respondents mentioned the fact that physical activity, and PE and recess specifically, are critical to a child's development process and work hand in hand with academic studies.***

SPECIFIC RESPONSES - PE AND RECESS CHALLENGES

a. Staffing

"We do not have a certified PE teacher on staff."
"Not enough certified teachers to give kids a break and provide PE."
"Not enough teaching staff."
"Limited by number of staff, especially at smaller sites."

b. Scheduling

"Increased rigor of English, math, and science standards have challenged PE time at the elementary school."
"Only challenge is individual student schedules in high school. We try to get freshmen to take PE in their first year so that they can take [Alaska Performance Scholarship] courses."
"Time and core content is always the challenge."
"Yes, time in the day. There are so many other requirements for teaching academics that sometimes PE loses out."
"Required graduation content and the Alaska Performance Scholarship requirements make it difficult to provide scheduled P.E."

d. Weather

"Recess challenge with weather (policy up to -20F)."
"Outside weather."
"Also, try to provide PE in environment we live in (winter stay cooped up a lot of the time)."
"Also limited by weather, we don't do as much outdoor stuff."

e. Facility

"Main challenge: facility was part of navy base, so gym is no longer heated."
"At the moment we're squeezing K-12 into two buildings and one gym."
"Even with 2 facilities, middle school seems to be crowded. The old pool is supposed to be converted into a new community gym."
"We're number one in line to get a gym at the high school. We need a middle/high school gym to have legitimate PE classes."

f. Equipment

"Shipping of equipment is cost prohibitive. Equipment is too expensive to replace."
"There used to be challenges with providing quality recess, but through PTSA funding and grants we got brand new playground equipment."
"Yes, we do not have the funding… required to update old and outdated equipment."

g. Funding

"Budget--since many policies are unwritten there is a danger the programs could be cut."
"Funding. We tried to hire a .5 PE Teacher at the elementary this year, but cuts to aides caused the board to deny."
"We do not have the funding to hire a full-time PE teacher."

h. Professional Development

"With staff turnover it can be a challenge to keep Elementary teachers trained."
"Making sure we have… better professional development for teachers."
"Time for professional development."
"Yes, we do not have the funding to… provide needed PE professional development."

i. Other

"At district level, board has articulated [PE and Recess are] not necessary, but not everyone agrees [they are]."
"School is focusing on attendance and grades, PE has taken a backseat."
"Sometimes, small numbers force creativity in terms of activities, team sports [in PE]."

Question 29 : Suggestions

NOTE: This was an open-ended question, and therefore responses often fell into more than one category.

DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR SOLUTIONS TO THESE CHALLENGES/BARRIERS THAT COULD BE DONE ON A STATE LEVEL?

a. *No*	16
b. *Funding (Staff)*	10
c. *Funding (General)*	9
d. *Stronger Requirements*	8
e. *Funding (Professional Development)*	7
f. *Funding (Equipment/Facility)*	6
g. *Other*	6

RESULTS

Many districts expressed interest in having funding allocated for more staff, professional development, and better equipment and facilities. ***There was also a desire for the state requirements to be stronger so that districts could prioritize PE and recess more in staffing and scheduling.***

SPECIFIC RESPONSES - SUGGESTIONS

b. Funding (Staff)

"Provide enough funding for full time PE instructors at four (4) K-12 schools and three (3) K-8 schools."
"Possibly funding for itinerant PE teachers."
"Allocate funding specifically for PE/Health endorsed staff."
"Increase funding so that we could hire more PE teachers."

c. Funding (General)

"Increase the per student funding. We want to provide quality education, and need to see increase to do that."
"Funding is needed to provide."
"Funding, support so that community can continue to retain high quality."
"Provide economic support for districts."

d. Stronger Requirements

"Would like to see 1 credit of PE and 1 of Health without waivers (2 credits in total). Physical Education and activities should be required, as well as Health and Safety if they are separated. No waivers would indicate the belief that children are well, not just playing sports. Stronger teeth in number of minutes suggested by the state for elementary and middle levels. Guideline that State suggests XX number of min at elementary and middle."
"I think policies should stipulate required number of minutes needed for physical education in grades K-12."
"Require PE to be taught at all years of middle school and that at least 3 credits of PE are required to graduate from high school."
"State mandated more PE/recess, increase compliance."

e. Funding (Professional Development)

"Providing more on-site training rather than expensive travel/time away."
"Offering professional development or better publicity for professional development and staff. Curriculum development help."
"Contract with [a consultant group] that provides in-service training for staff, supplemental curriculum, tools to supplement for elementary, middle, and high school."

f. Funding (Equipment/Facility)

"Provide funding for covered outdoor play areas."
"Money for facilities and improvement, only districts

that are on the [Capital Improvement Program] list get funding and have $ to revitalize play area, but not many projects are being funded. Upkeep on facilities is very expensive. Invest in our school and not just base student allocation, but also capital projects."
"Money for indoor facilities when severe weather limits outdoor options."
"So state needs to be flexible in terms of facilities, more space for smaller schools indoors. Tailor to individual needs."

g. Other

"More local freedom."
"So much emphasis on APS courses, sometimes only 6 courses left for other courses. Squeezed between what were required to offer and what students would like to take. PE/Health often pushed to the side."
"All the assessments."

Part II: Alaska School District Written PE and Recess Policy Collection & Analysis

OVERVIEW OF STUDY METHODS

Part II examined written policies from 94% (51 out of 54) of Alaska's school districts. These policies were found on the individual school district's websites, were provided to the researchers by district personnel, or were found on the State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development website (http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/cnp/wellness.html). All written policies were collected between December 2013 and March 2014 and copies were provided to the DHHS.

For the purpose of this study, PE and Recess Policies were defined to include:

1) the actual district Board Policy (BP 5040 Student Nutrition and Physical Activity Section) approved by the district school board, and

2) the associated Administrative Regulations (AR 5040), including implementation regulations, rules, procedures, or administrative guidelines, as well as memoranda from the district department chair.

All policies were analyzed using an adaption of the Wellness Policy coding scheme from in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report "Bridging the Gap: Research informing policies and practices for healthy youth" (2010).

For each policy, data are presented on the percentage of school districts in Alaska: 1) a strong policy; 2) a weak policy; or 3) no policy. STRONG POLICY PROVISIONS were defined as those that were definitely required and suggested an implementation plan or strategy. Strong policy provisions included language such as shall, must, will, and require; or meets or exceeds the CDC recommendations. WEAK POLICY PROVISIONS were defined as those that included vague terms, suggestions or recommendations, as well as those that required action, but noted exceptions for certain grade levels or certain times of day; or did not meet the CDC recommendations. Weak policy provisions included language such as should, might, encourage, some, make an effort to, partial or try.

NOTE: Mt. Edgecumbe High School was included in the survey sample, however none of the elementary or middle school questions are relevant to the policies at this school because it is a state sponsored boarding school for secondary students only. Questions about elementary and middle school policies and practices, therefore, only have 50 respondents.

WRITTEN POLICY ANALYSIS

Physical Education and recess policies adopted and/or revised (required Wellness Policy element)		
No policy/last policy adoption or update 2005-2007	33%	17/51
Policy adopted/updated 2008-2010	14%	7/51
Policy adopted/updated 2011-2014	53%	27/51

Physical Education required at Elementary level		
No written policy/provision	40%	20/50
Weak policy (e.g., "aim to provide", "to the extent possible")	48%	24/50
Strong policy (e.g., "will provide")	12%	6/50

Amount of time specified for physical education at the Elementary level (CDC recommendation: at least 150 min/week)		
No written policy/provision or blank template	56%	28/50
Weak policy (less than 150 min/week)	34%	17/50
Strong policy (150 min/week +)	10%	5/50
Physical Education required at Middle School level		
No written policy/provision	42%	21/50
Weak policy ("aim to provide", "to the extent possible")	46%	23/50
Strong policy ("will provide")	12%	6/50
Amount of time specified for physical education at the Middle School level (CDC recommendation: at least 225 min/week)		
No written policy/provision or blank template	58%	29/50
Weak policy (less than 225 min/week)	32%	16/50
Strong policy (225 min/week +)	10%	5/50
Physical Education required at High School level		
No written policy/provision	45%	23/51
Weak policy ("aim to provide", "to the extent possible")	45%	23/51
Strong policy ("will provide")	10%	5/51
Amount of time specified for physical education at the High School level (CDC recommendation: at least 225 min/week)		
No written policy/provision or blank template	59%	30/51
Weak policy (less than 225 min/week or undefined e.g., "4 times per week")	35%	18/51
Strong policy (225 min/week +)	6%	3/51
Prohibited use of (e.g., running laps) or withholding physical activity (e.g., recess) as punishment		
No written policy/provision	46%	23/50
Weak policy (e.g., "loss of recess minimized")	10%	5/50
Strong policy	44%	22/50

Daily recess requirements at Elementary level		
No written policy/provision	50%	25/50
Definitely addressed	50%	25/50

Amount of time specified for recess at the Elementary level (CDC recommendation: at least 20 min/day)		
No written policy/provision or blank template	66%	33/50
Weak policy (less than 20 min/day or undetermined "daily")	8%	4/50
Strong policy (20 min/day +)	26%	13/50

Daily recess requirements at Middle School level		
No written policy/provision	100%	50/50
Definitely addressed	0%	0/50

Policy Analysis and Discussion

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

FINDINGS

- Even though many districts have written policies, very few districts had the actual minutes written in their policy.
- Sixty percent of districts have a written policy requiring PE for **elementary** students. However, 91% of districts have written and/or unwritten policies and do provide PE at the **elementary** level.
- Only 10% of districts have a written policy requiring at least the recommended 150 minutes of PE at **elementary** and 56% do not have any minimum number in their written policy. In practice, 17% do provide 150 or more.
- Fifty-eight percent of districts have a written policy for PE at the **middle** school level. Eighty-three percent have written/unwritten policies and actually provide PE at **middle** school.
- Only 10% of the districts meet the recommended 225 minutes for **middle** school PE in their written policy. Fifty-eight percent have no minimum requirements in their written policy. 32% of the districts actually meet the recommended 225 minutes for **middle** school PE in practice.
- Eighty-five percent of survey respondents reported PE was required at the **high** school level and was in the district's written policy. This is related to a state graduation requirement of 1 credit of PE or Health or 1/2 credit each.
- Only 6% of the districts have a written policy requiring at least the recommended 225 minutes for **high** school PE. Fifty-nine percent have no minimum requirements in their written policy. 37% of districts meet the recommended 225 minutes for **high** school PE in practice.
- Eighty-one percent of survey respondents said written policies are being implemented at most/all of the schools in their district.
- Not all key district personnel know what is in their written policies.

DISCUSSION

Written PE policies are statements that show stakeholder support and provide an element of accountability. It may be an aversion to accountability that causes districts to shy away from written policies that commit resources to PE in times of tight budgets, scheduling challenges, and staffing issues. As one survey respondent commented, "Since many policies are unwritten there is danger the programs could be cut."

It may also be the case that the local school board does not value or understand the importance of PE as the cornerstone of a comprehensive school physical activity program, as another survey respondent reported, "At district level, board has articulated (PE and Recess are) not necessary, but not everyone agrees (they are)."

Written policies, such as the state graduation requirement, can lead to more PE opportunities for students. Policies allocate resources and send a message that PE is a critical aspect of a child's physical, mental, and emotional development.

Low percentages of districts meeting the recommended number of minutes of PE in their written policies at all levels (Elementary 17%, Middle School 32%, High School 37%), are concerning. However, as the survey revealed, just because a policy is not written, it doesn't mean it isn't happening.

There is an internal struggle within districts to balance time for physical education and core curriculum and academics at all levels. A survey respondent aptly stated, "School is focusing on attendance and grades; PE has taken a backseat."

QUALIFIED PE TEACHERS

FINDINGS

- Eight-five percent of districts follow state/national curriculums that provides a road map to PE teachers, regardless of their qualifications (9% of the survey respondents didn't know). However this does not provide specific strategies for meeting the standards. Certified and/or endorsed teachers are thought to have this knowledge.
- Eighty-three percent of districts require that elementary students be taught PE by certified elementary teachers.
- Sixty-seven percent of districts require middle and high school PE teachers to be endorsed by state in PE.

- Thirty-three percent of districts reported their PE teachers do receive regular professional development in PE. A survey respondent stated, "With staff turnover it can be a challenge to keep Elementary teachers trained."

DISCUSSION

With a strong physical education program in place, students will become physically active and acquire skills to live a healthy life. It is commonly understood that a quality program requires a quality teacher. Professional development enables educators to update and hone their skills and in turn, students benefit. Alaskan school districts are varied and unique, each with unique staffing challenges. Larger districts may have district PE coordinators, PE departments and on-site professional development, while smaller, rural districts may have only one head teacher who does everything.

There are some strong curricular and teacher requirements in place in some districts, as the survey revealed. Several survey respondents conveyed the need for professional development, such as "providing more on-site training rather than expensive travel/time away." Suggestions for itinerant PE teachers, allocated funding for PE/Health endorsed staff, and "in-service training for staff, supplemental curriculum" warrant further investigation.

It is critical to keep in mind that districts must balance what is optimal and what is feasible. As one rural educator expressed, "PE would not be offered if a certified or PE endorsed teacher had to teach."

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS PUNISHMENT AND/OR BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

FINDINGS

- Forty-six percent of districts do not have any policies prohibiting excluding students from PE for bad behavior or incomplete classwork or using physical activity as punishment.
- Fifty-four percent of districts have some mention in their policy, but only 44% of those have strong language (10% suggest time lost should be "minimized," "other options explored," or used on a "limited basis."). Only 32% of survey respondents reported their districts have such a policy.

DISCUSSION

Although it has been practiced in some schools in the past, current NASPE recommendations suggest it is inappropriate to use physical activity as punishment or behavior management. Students should have positive experiences with physical activity and PE, and should not be excluded from PE or recess because of bad behavior or incomplete work. Physical activity can have positive effects on student academic behavior and concentration.

Several professional organizations support NASPE position, and school districts should implement similar policies. Further, school board policies should be made known to school personnel who interact with students on a daily basis, so policy can be reflected in practice.

WAIVERS AND EXEMPTIONS

FINDINGS

- Fifty percent of Alaskan school districts allow waivers, exemptions, or substitutions.
- Extra-curricular activities fulfill PE requirements for 93% of the districts that allow waivers, exemptions, or substitutions.

DISCUSSION

Physical education differs from physical activity because of the added elements of a curriculum, or systematic progression of skills and knowledge. NASPE recommends that schools and districts to not permit waivers and/or exemptions to replace required PE time. School district size and location may be a factor in this consideration. Some districts reported waivers, exemptions, or substitutions have never been requested or needed.

Waivers and exemptions do not address standards for what a physically educated student should know and be able to do. If districts choose to allow waivers or exemptions, the physical activity requirement may have been met, but districts should ensure the knowledge requirements are met as well. One survey respondent suggested, (I) "would like to see 1 credit of PE and 1 of health without waivers. Physical Education and activities should be required, as well as Health and Safety if they

are separated. No waivers would indicate (the) belief that children are well, not just playing sports."

FACILITIES

FINDINGS

- Seventy-two percent of districts have dedicated PE facilities at most/all of the schools.
- Only 7% have no facility other than an multi-purpose/ cafeteria for PE classes.

DISCUSSION

Schools can provide space, time, equipment, and facilities that make physical education and activity appealing. Scheduling PE classes in some Alaskan schools can be challenging because of space limitations.

There are specific needs in districts (e.g., no heat in the gym, overcrowding, schools working their way up the list for capital improvements) that interfere with providing a quality PE program. However, the majority of districts do have dedicated facilities in most or all of their schools. One survey respondent requested, "Money for facilities and improvements, only districts that are on the [Capital Improvement Project] list get funding and have money to revitalize play area, but not many projects are being funded. Upkeep on facilities is expensive. Invest in our schools and not just base student allocation, but also capital projects."

RECESS

FINDINGS

- About 50% of districts have recess policies, although many survey respondents were not aware of district policies.
- Recess is provided in practice more than the written policies suggest. At the elementary level, only 26% of the written policies require more than 20 minutes per day of recess. In practice, 94% provide 20 minutes or more.
- No districts have a written policy for recess at the Middle school level. 63% of districts actually provides "recess" or open gym at the middle school level, although the amount of time varies widely.
- 77% of elementary schools schedule lunch and recess separately.

DISCUSSION

Educators agree on the importance of physical activity to complement academics. With increased focus on academic achievement and test scores, districts may be hesitant to put specific minutes in written policy because of the public perception of "play time."

Alaska has special considerations (weather, space, equipment maintenance and shipping costs) for outdoor recess. "Although we do try to get kids outside," one respondent said, "the weather presents challenges. District policy requires students to go outside if the temperature is above -20F."

School districts and the State can build on the momentum of successful public awareness campaigns such as "Play Every Day" to build public understanding on the importance and benefits of 60 minutes of daily physical activity. School Board policy and distribution of district recess policy can empower school personnel in making scheduling decisions that includes opportunities for physical activity during the school day. Additionally, there is a need for further exploration as to how school districts can adopt policies that reflect their actual practice.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to gather basic information about Alaska's school district policies on PE and recess. The survey gathered insightful information on how Alaska school districts are implementing their PE and recess policies. Gathering and analyzing updated written policies from school districts was also an important step toward understanding and monitoring Alaska policies in the future.

In summary, a number of key concepts are highlighted as a result of this effort.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Adopting written policies provides school districts with a higher likelihood of implementation. However, while a low percentage of Alaska's school districts have adopted written policies, a moderate percentage of school districts have practices consistent with nationally recommended standards. Physical Education is not currently prioritized as a core curriculum requirement. There seems to be a desire among districts for this to change.

STAFF AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Several survey respondents conveyed the need for more professional development in the PE field. Resources and incentives to increase available professional development opportunities should be considered.

POLICY ON WITHHOLDING PE OR RECESS

A modest number of school districts have a policy that prohibits the exclusion of students from PE or recess as a form of punishment. School districts should be encouraged to adopt this policy.

WAIVERS AND EXEMPTIONS

NASPE recommends that substitutions, exemptions, and waivers for PE not be allowed. The State of Alaska, however, does not prohibit the use of waivers. Assuming the State of Alaska does not intend on changing this policy, alternative methods should be explored to assure PE program requirements are met not through extracurricular activities.

FACILITIES/EQUIPMENT

The majority of districts do have adequate facilities in most or all of their schools, however, many reported equipment needs. Perhaps supplemental funding outside of the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) process could be considered.

RECESS

While educators agree on the importance of physical activity to complement academics, there appears to be a hesitance to a) put specific minutes into the policy, and; b) to schedule time for recess into the school day. Additionally, there appears to be a disconnect between written policy minutes and minutes provided in practice. There is a need for further exploration as to how school districts can to adopt policies that reflect their actual practice.

Written policies, curriculum, professional development, facilities and recess time are all important elements to assessing Alaska's school districts PE and recess policies. **Appendix I** provides a list of suggested questions for future consideration as this critical public health issue continues to be a priority for the State of Alaska.

Appendices

Appendix I: Suggested Questions for Future Policy Analysis 36
Appendix II: National and Alaska State PE Standards 37
Appendix III: Alaska PE and Recess Survey 38
Appendix IV: Works Cited 47

Appendix I: Suggested Questions for Future Policy Analysis

Based on the information gathered through this survey and current district policy analysis, the following questions were developed to guide future inquiry into the PE and recess policies in the state of Alaska:

Written Policies

- What is the percentage of students in Alaska receiving adequate time for physical education and/or recess?
- How can individual district PE and recess policies be assessed?
- How can the implementation of policies be monitored?
- How can the State support districts in adopting policies that align with current research and best practices?

Curriculum

- How can PE be emphasized as part of the core curriculum and as a daily requirement?

Staff and Professional Development

- How can districts ensure key school personnel are aware of district policies?
- Would an itinerant PE teacher and/or Teacher Expert be effective in smaller, rural districts?
- What are PE teachers' preferred methods of professional development? Would PE teachers be most interested in distance learning, site-based professional development, attending conferences, participating in Listservs?

Prohibiting the Exclusion of Students from PE or Recess as Punishment

- How can districts be encouraged to adopt a policy that prohibits teachers from denying PE or recess as a form of punishment?

Waivers and Exemptions

- What other methods could be used to assure students' competency in Physical Education if policies continue to allow for waivers, exemptions, and substitutions?

Facilities/Equipment

- How can the State make additional funding available to support and improve school district facilities and equipment?

Recess

- When policies do not exist or when practices improve on written policies, how can school districts be encouraged to adopt policies that reflect their practices?

Other

Which stakeholders are already on board with implementing the recommended PE and physical activities policies? Who can be the "cheerleaders"? Who is best to carry the message? Who will be the opposition?

To assess this, additional surveys or random samples may ask questions to gauge support, such as:

- What is the PTA/school staff's perception of the importance of physical education and/or physical activity in schools?
- What is the community perception of the importance of physical education and/or physical activity in schools?
- How do local school boards in Alaska perceive the importance of physical education and/or physical activity in schools?
- How does the Alaska State Board of Education perceive the importance of physical education and/or physical activity in schools?

Appendix II: National & Alaska State PE Standards

The National Standards for Physical Education (NASPE, 2014) identifies the knowledge and skills a physically literate person should know and be able to do. The Alaska Physical Education Standards (2010) are based on the national standards.

National Standards for Physical Education

The goal of physical education is to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity.

To pursue a lifetime of healthful physical activity, a physically literate individual:

- Has learned the skills necessary to participate in a variety of physical activities.
- Knows the implications of and the benefits from involvement in various types of physical activities.
- Participates regularly in physical activity.
- Is physically fit.
- Values physical activity and its contributions to a healthful lifestyle.

Standard 1 - The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.

Standard 2 - The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.

Standard 3 - The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.

Standard 4 - The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.

Standard 5 - The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.

Alaska Physical Education Standards

Alaska Standards-based Physical Education is essential for the health and well-being of every Alaskan student including those with special needs. Physical Education, a content area in the total educational program;

- Focuses on fitness.
- Teaches skills that lead to enjoyment of lifelong physical activity.
- Enhances all aspects of development including but not limited to health, academic performance, physical fitness, movement knowledge, goal setting, self-esteem, stress management, and social skills.
- Embraces the unique challenges of Alaska's geographic location, cultural diversity, climate, and local school structure.

A physically educated student will:

Standard A - Demonstrate competency in motor and movement skills needed to perform a variety of physical activities.

Standard B - Apply movement concepts to the learning and performance of physical activities

Standard C - Participate regularly in physical activity.

Standard D - Apply fitness concepts to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of personal fitness.

Standard E - Exhibit personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings.

Standard F - Value physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction.

Each PE standard has specific learning objectives for each grade level (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12). The State Board of Education adopted the Alaska Physical Education Standards in March 2010 (04 AAC 04.140).

A survey of Alaska's school districts regarding PE and recess policies for the Department of Health and Social Services School Health Program by Denali L Daniels and Associates.

The results of this statewide survey will be produced in a report for the School Health Program only. This is an independent survey, and is not tied to any federal or state funding. It is simply a tool for the School Health program to assess the status of PE and Recess policies in Alaska's school districts.

School District Name _____

Contact Info
Recipient name: _____
Phone number: _____
Email: _____
Date: _____

QUESTIONS: Written District Policies

The first 11 questions are about PE policies.

1. Does your district have a written policy requiring PE at the elementary level?
(often they are in the Policy Manual, 5040 section, titled Student Nutrition and Physical Activity)
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No, but we have an unwritten policy
- ◯ No policy at all
- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ Other:

2. How much time per week does your PE policy provide for elementary schools?
Please check applicable box **AND** also add exact number of minutes in 'Other' category.
Check all that apply.

- ☐ No PE time is required by the policy
- ☐ Up to 30 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 31-60 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 61-90 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 91-120 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 121-150 minutes per week
- ☐ Over 150 minutes per week
- ☐ Other

3. **Are the minutes in your written policy?**
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ Other

4. **Does your district have a written policy requiring PE at the middle school level?**
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No, but we have an unwritten policy
- ◯ No policy at all
- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ Other:

5. How much time per week does your PE policy provide for middle schools?
Please check applicable box **AND** also add exact number of minutes in 'Other' category.
Check all that apply.

- ☐ No PE time is required by the policy
- ☐ Up to 30 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 31-60 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 61-90 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 91-120 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 121-150 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 151-180 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 181-225 minutes per week
- ☐ Over 225 minutes per week
- ☐ Other:

6. Are the minutes in your written policy?

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ Other:

7. Does your district have a written policy requiring PE at the high school level?

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No, but we have an unwritten policy
- ◯ No policy at all
- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ Other:

8. How much time per week does your PE policy provide for high schools?

Please check applicable box **AND** also add exact number of minutes in 'Other' category.

Check all that apply.

- ☐ No PE time is required by the policy
- ☐ Up to 30 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 31-60 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 61-90 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 91-120 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 121-150 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 151-180 minutes per week
- ☐ Between 181-225 minutes per week
- ☐ Over 225 minutes per week
- ☐ Other:

9. Are the minutes in your written policy?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Other:

10. Is there a written PE policy for your school district prohibiting excluding students from physical education or recess for bad behavior or failure to complete class work in another class?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No, but there is an unwritten policy
- No policy at all
- Don't know
- Other:

11. Are all of the written PE policies being implemented?

Mark only one oval.

- PE Policies are **not being implemented at any schools**.
- PE policies are being implemented at **some schools**.
- PE policies are being implemented at **most or all schools**.
- I don't know.
- Other:

The following 8 questions have to do with RECESS policies.

12. Does your district have a written policy requiring recess for elementary schools?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No, but we have an unwritten policy
- No policy at all
- I don't know
- Other:

13. How many minutes per day do the elementary schools in the district provide recess?
Also, add exact number of minutes in 'Other' category.

- ☐ Less than 20 minutes
- ☐ 20-30 minutes
- ☐ 31-45 minutes
- ☐ I don't know.
- ☐ Other:

14. Are the minutes in your written policy?
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ Other:

15. Does your district have a written policy requiring recess for middle schools?
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No, but we have an unwritten policy
- ◯ No policy at all
- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ Other:

16. How many minutes per day do the middle schools in the district provide recess?
AND please add exact number of minutes in 'Other' category.

- ☐ Less than 20 minutes
- ☐ 20-30 minutes
- ☐ 31-45 minutes
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other:

17. Are the minutes in your written policy?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Other:

18. Do elementary schools in the district schedule recess as a separate and distinct time from lunch?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Other:

19. Are all of the written recess policies being implemented?

Mark only one oval.

- Recess Policies are **not being implemented in any schools**.
- Recess Policies are being implemented in **some schools**.
- Recess policies are being implemented in **most or all schools**.
- I don't know.
- Other:

The last 9 questions are on a variety of PE topics.

20. How many high school credits does your district require in PE for high school graduation?
This does not include health education credits, but strictly PE credits. If the policy lists 'EITHER OR,' please note in "Other."

Mark only one oval.

- 0 credits
- .5 credits
- 1 credit
- 1.5 credits
- 2 credits
- 2.5 credits
- 3 credits
- I don't know.
- Other:

21. Does your district curriculum follow the Alaska PE standards and/or national PE standards?
Check all that apply.

- [ ] Our PE curriculum follows **Alaska PE standards**
- [ ] Our PE curriculum follows **national PE standards**
- [ ] Our PE curriculum is not based on either
- [ ] We do not have an established PE curriculum
- [ ] I don't know
- [ ] Other:

22. Do PE teachers in your district receive regular professional development in Physical Education?
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ Other:

23. Are all elementary PE classes taught by certified teachers and not teacher aides or paraprofessionals?
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ Other:

24. The State of Alaska does not require middle or high school PE teachers to have PE endorsements to teach PE. However, some school districts do require it. Are middle and high school PE teachers in your school district required to be endorsed by the state in physical education?
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ Other:

25. Does your school district allow waivers, exemptions, or substitutions to replace required PE time other than for medical reasons?

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No (if no, skip next question)
- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ Other:

26. If yes, what circumstances are considered for approving waivers, exemptions or substitutions to replace required PE time?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Extracurricular activities
- ☐ Substituting other class work
- ☐ Student's preference
- ☐ Correspondence school
- ☐ Other:

27. Is there an indoor facility dedicated to PE other than a multipurpose room/cafeteria in all the schools in your district?

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ **None** of the schools have an indoor facility dedicated to PE other than a multipurpose room/cafeteria.
- ◯ **Some** of the schools have an indoor facility dedicated to PE other than a multipurpose room/cafeteria.
- ◯ **Most or all** of the schools have an indoor facility dedicated to PE other than a multipurpose room/cafeteria.
- ◯ I don't know.
- ◯ Other:

28. Are there challenges to providing quality PE or recess to students in your school district?
Please explain briefly.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

29. Do you have any suggestions for solutions to these challenges/barriers that could be done on a State level?
Please explain briefly.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank You!

Thank you so much for your participation! We really appreciate your time. Is a copy of your current PE and Recess policy available on your website? (If not, would you please send Chelsea@DDAalaska.com a copy of your written policy electronically, either by fax 907.334.5780 or email?)

If you have any questions or further comments please contact the School Health Program Manager, Wendy Hamilton at 907-465-2768 or wendy.hamilton@alaska.gov.

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