

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 3043

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to promoting physical fitness in middle school.

Brief Description: Promoting physical fitness in middle school.

Sponsors: Representatives Tom, Quall, Bailey, Lantz, McDermott, Anderson, Chase, Morrell and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/2/04, 2/5/04 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires school districts to adopt a physical education and fitness curriculum for middle school students.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; McDermott, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Tom, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Cox, Haigh, Hunter, McMahan, Rockefeller and Santos.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

The Center for Disease Control and the U. S. Surgeon General have declared childhood obesity and the onset of Type II Diabetes to be epidemics. Within the past 20 years, the number of overweight children has more than doubled. The American Medical Association (AMA) reports that approximately 14 percent of children and 12 percent of adolescents are overweight. In children and adolescents, obesity has immediate health and psychosocial implications but a principal concern is that overweight and obesity acquired during childhood or adolescence may persist into adulthood and increase the risk for some chronic diseases later in life.

The AMA has concluded that reversing these trends requires changes in individual behavior and the elimination of societal barriers to healthy lifestyle choices. One of the strategies for behavioral change identified by the AMA is an increase in physical activity, including school-based physical education programs.

The State Board of Education (SBE) minimum requirements for physical education instruction are 100 minutes per week per year for students in grades one through eight, and one credit per year for students in high school.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

By September 1, 2006, school districts are required to adopt a physical education and fitness curriculum for all middle school students. The curriculum must include a daily period of physical activity in which at least 20 minutes consists of aerobic activity in the student's target heart rate zone. In order to accommodate a rotating class schedule, or other scheduling needs, districts are granted a limited degree of flexibility in meeting these requirements so long as the total number of minutes of aerobic activity each week is equal to at least 20 minutes per day. Components of the curriculum must include instruction in basic movement and fine motor skills, progressive physical fitness, athletic conditioning, and nutrition and wellness. Activities should be designed to expose students to a wide variety of physical activities; teach lifetime health and fitness skills; encourage self-monitoring and goal-setting; allow students to individualize activities; emphasize individual best efforts; and foster positive social development.

School districts also are encouraged to adopt physical education and fitness programs for students at the elementary school and high school levels and to articulate instruction across the grades. The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) is encouraged to facilitate the sharing of best practices between districts and the dissemination of information and resources that may assist districts in developing their programs.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

A provision is added allowing for flexibility in meeting the daily requirements in order to accommodate a district's scheduling needs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support) In order to get a handle on rising healthcare costs, we must address obesity as one of the primary causes of rising healthcare needs. As healthcare costs become a bigger portion of the budget, the money needed will be coming from education budgets. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has identified obesity as the number one health problem in the United States. To combat this problem, the AAP has put the need for regular physical exercise on equal footing with the need to reduce consumption of unhealthy foods. Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming obese adults. This bill addresses the need to introduce regular physical exercise to middle school students and to meet our responsibility to future generations. Students should be taught information about proper nutrition and have opportunities to develop active lifestyles. There is currently a classroom-based assessment available to school districts.

The Washington Department of Health believes that moderate exercise of at least 30 minutes three to five times per week would be an improvement over current levels of inactivity.

This bill is not about creating or finding star athletes; it's about developing healthier lifestyles. It's not about dieting; it's about learning how to become and remain active and healthy.

(In support with concerns) A requirement for daily exercise and aerobic activity could present some vexing curriculum issues. Since there is no hammer to enforce this requirement it may raise expectations that cannot be met. If the Legislature funds a health and fitness Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) it would support this goal. In order to meet these requirements, school districts will need some flexibility to accommodate scheduling needs.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Tom, prime sponsor; Cynthia Shurtleff, Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Colleen Wilks, American Heart Association; and Mike O'Sullivan, American Cancer Society.

(In support with concerns) Larry Davis, State Board of Education; and Greg Williamson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.