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## Memorandum

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**DATE:** March 2011  
**TO:** Communities  
**FROM:** BlazeSports America  
**RE:** Daily Physical Education Resources

As communities across our nation work to arrest the childhood obesity rates which have more than tripled in the past 30 years, many are considering initiatives supporting a daily physical education (PE) policy. Physical education offers all students – including students with a physical disability - many benefits. From motor skill development, to improved fitness, to an increased likelihood of adopting an active lifestyle as an adult, quality daily physical education offers many benefits and is an ideal way to improve overall health and wellness of youth. Recent studies also indicate students participating in daily physical education may benefit emotionally and academically.

BlazeSports has developed a number of policy resources to support communities interested in adopting daily physical education requirements. This document contains a resolution, justification, and list of resources for communities to customize and adopt. BlazeSports experts are available to assist you if you have any questions on developing a daily physical education policy that includes individuals with a physical disability. Please contact Ann Cody, Director of Policy & Global Outreach, [acody@blazesports.org](mailto:acody@blazesports.org) or 202-312-7419 for more information.

## Daily Physical Education Policy Justification

**The Issue:** Childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions in the United States. Nearly 10 million children and adolescents ages six to 19 are considered obese.<sup>1</sup> As these obese children grow older, they have a much greater risk than their normal weight peers of developing and dying from chronic diseases in adulthood.<sup>2</sup> Some experts claim that by 2015, 75% of adults will be overweight with 41% obese.<sup>3</sup> {Communities may choose to add state or locality specific statistics on their community's obesity rates from "Trust for America's Health. 2010 *F as in fat report: How obesity threatens America's future*" to support this proposal.<sup>4</sup>}

**Recommendations:** One important way to arrest this rise in obesity in our children is through strong physical education programs in our nation's schools. The federal government and national health-related organizations strongly recommend that schools provide daily physical education (PE) for students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 and require and implement a planned and sequential PE curriculum for all students to promote physical activity and reduce obesity. Recommendations include 150 minutes of daily PE each week for children in elementary school and 225 minutes per week for middle school and high school.<sup>5-6</sup> Quality of the physical education program is also paramount. A high-quality physical education program taught by a certified physical education teacher enhances the physical, mental, and social/emotional development of all children and helps them understand, improve, and maintain physical well-being.

**The Benefits:** Physically active children, including children with disabilities, are more likely to thrive academically and socially. Through effective physical education, children learn how to incorporate safe and healthy activities into their lives. Physical education is an integral part of developing the "whole" child for success in social settings and the learning environment. Studies suggest that student physical fitness is positively associated with academic achievement.<sup>7-12</sup> Additional studies indicate time in physical education does not negatively impact academic achievement.<sup>13</sup>

**Action Plan for Physical Education:** The American Heart Association advocates for daily, quality physical education in our nation's schools, together with other healthy lifestyle choices and recommends the following:<sup>14</sup>

1 Lloyd-Jones D, et al., Heart disease and stroke statistics—2010 update: a report from the American Heart Association. *Circulation* 2009; published online before print December 17, 2009, 10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.109.192667.

2 Baker JL, Olsen LW, Sorensen T, Childhood body mass index and the risk of coronary heart disease in adulthood. *New Engl J Med*; 2007. 357(23):2329-2337.

3 Wang Y, Beydoun MA. The obesity epidemic in the U.S.-gender, age, socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and geographic characteristics: a systematic review & meta-regression analysis. *Epidemiologic Reviews* 2007;29:6-28.

4 Trust for America's Health. *2010 F as in fat report: How obesity threatens America's future*. Washington, DC: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2010.

5 National Association for Sport and Physical Education. What constitutes a quality physical education program [Position Statement]. 2003. Reston, VA: Author.

6 American Heart Association. Physical education in schools – both quality and quantity are important. Washington, DC: Author.

7 California Department of Education. A Study of the relationship between physical fitness and academic achievement in California using 2004 test results.

8 Welk J, Allen WJ, Morrow JR, et al. The association of health-related fitness with indicators of academic performance in Texas schools. *RQES*; 2010. 81 (Suppl3):S16-S23.

9 Eggar JR, Bartley KF, Benson L, Bellino D, & Kerker B. Childhood obesity is a serious concern in New York City: higher levels of fitness associated with better academic performance. *NYV Vital Signs*; 2009. 8(1):1-4.

10 Castelli D, Hillman C, Buck S, & Erwin H. Physical fitness and academic achievement in third-and-fifth grade students. *J Sport & Ex Psych*; 2007. 29:239-252.

11 Chomitz V, Slining M, McGowan R, et al. Is there a relationship between physical fitness and academic achievement? Positive results from public school children in the northeastern United States. *J Sch Health*; 2009. 79(10):30-37.

12 Wittberg RA, Northrup KL, & Cottrell LA. Children's physical fitness and academic achievement. *Am J Health Educ*; 2009. 40(1):30-36.

13 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The association between school-based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance. 2011. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services.

14 American Heart Association, Fact sheet on physical education in public schools. Washington, DC: Author.

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- Require all school districts to develop and implement a planned K-12 physical education curriculum that adheres to national and state standards for health and physical education.
  - Hire a physical education coordinator at the state level to provide resources and offer support to school districts across the state.
  - Offer regular professional development opportunities to physical education teachers that are specific to their field.
  - Require physical education teachers to be highly-qualified and certified.
  - Add valid fitness, cognitive, and affective assessments in physical education that are based on student improvement and knowledge gain.
  - Require that students be active in moderate-vigorous physical activity for at least 50% of physical education class time.
  - Assure that physical education programs have appropriate equipment and adequate facilities.
  - Not allow students to opt out of physical education to prepare for other classes or standardized tests.
  - Not allow waivers or substitutions for physical education.
  - Require physical education for graduation and count the physical education grade as part of a student's overall GPA.

Furthermore, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), the non-profit professional membership association that sets the standard for best practices in quality physical education and sport, provides numerous position statements and guidance documents for additional consideration such as recommended class size, appropriate maximum class length, and attributes of both a quality physical education program and the highly qualified physical education teacher.

## *Resolution*

### *To Support the Requirement of Daily Physical Education to promote their health and wellbeing*

*Whereas*, the 2010 Surgeon General's *Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation* strongly recommends that school systems should require daily physical education (PE) for students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12<sup>1</sup>; and

*Whereas*, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and national health-related organizations – the American Heart Association (AHA), the American Stroke Association (ASA), the American Cancer Society (ACS), the Institute of Medicine (IOM), and the American Diabetes Association (ADA) – strongly recommend 150 minutes of daily PE each week for children in elementary school and 225 minutes per week for middle school and high school<sup>2</sup>; and

*Whereas*, the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommend 1 hour (60 minutes) or more moderate/vigorous physical activity (MVPA) for children and adolescents daily<sup>3</sup>; and

*Whereas*, the *{insert local state/local data on youth and obesity}*; and

*Whereas*, according to recent *National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey* analyses, an estimated 16.9% of children and adolescents aged 2–19 years were obese, 14.8% of children and adolescents 2 to 19 years of age were overweight<sup>5a</sup>, and 33.8% of adults were obese<sup>5b</sup>; and

*Whereas*, a report issued by Trust for America's Health in 2010, **F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future** found that *{insert state rates from TFAH 2010 report}*<sup>6</sup>; and

*Whereas*, *{state}* ranked *{current overall health ranking}* among all states in overall health according to the 2010 America's Health Rankings, as compared with *{last year's ranking}* last year, and *{obesity ranking}* in prevalence of obesity<sup>7</sup>; and

*Whereas*, a 2010 Mission: Readiness, Military Leaders for Kids *Too Fat to Fight* report, warns that child obesity has become so serious in this country that the number of recruits who fail their physical due to overweight has increased nearly 70% since 1995, a threat not only to the overall health of America but also the future strength of the military<sup>8</sup>; and

*Whereas*, the 2008 medical costs of obesity in the United States were estimated at \$147 billion<sup>9</sup>; and

*Whereas*, the 2003 medical costs of obesity in *{state}* were estimated at \$*{cost}* million<sup>11</sup>; and

*Whereas*, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) 2009 results, 63% of US high school students and *{percentage}*% of *{state}* high school

students reported physical activity (that increased heart rate and made them breathe hard some of the time) at least 60 minutes/day on less than 5 days during the 7 days before the survey<sup>12</sup>; and

*Whereas*, accumulating studies indicate

- time in physical education does not negatively impact academic achievement<sup>13</sup>; and
- student physical fitness is positively correlated to academic achievement<sup>14a</sup>; and
- moderate or vigorous physical activity is associated with higher grades<sup>15a</sup> and improved cognitive responses<sup>15b-c</sup>; and

*Whereas*, the US *National Physical Activity Plan* includes strategies calling for access to high-quality, comprehensive physical activity programs, anchored by physical education in pre-kindergarten – 12<sup>th</sup> grades<sup>17</sup>; and

*Whereas*, the First Lady's *Let's Move* initiative recommends increasing the physical activity of our nations' youth in order to address childhood obesity within a generation, and the White House Task Force on Obesity recommends that physical education be the cornerstone of school physical activity programs<sup>18</sup>;

*Resolved*, that \_\_\_\_\_ *County Schools* calls upon the State of {state} Department of Education to adopt a physical education requirement ensuring that all students in grades K-12, including students with disabilities, special health-care needs, and in alternative educational settings, will receive quality daily physical education as an integral part of their education for the entire school year; and

*Resolved*, that the young people of {state} are our most valuable resources, and that their health, education and well-being are the most important responsibility of families, teachers, and community members; and

*Resolved*, that \_\_\_\_\_ *County Schools* believes that physical activity and exercise are essential for good health and must be encouraged during the developmental years of students; and

*Resolved*, that without healthy bodies, young people cannot take full advantage of their educational opportunities; and

*Resolved*, that \_\_\_\_\_ *County Schools* supports quality evidence-based physical education, 50% of time in physical education spent in moderate to vigorous activity, and no more than 25 students per physical education teacher, or the same size as other subject areas; and

*Resolved*, that \_\_\_\_\_ *County Schools* supports high-quality, comprehensive physical activity programs, anchored by physical education; and

*Resolved*, that \_\_\_\_\_ *County Schools* will report progress toward daily physical education, class size, percent PE time spent in MVPA, physical activity programming, and FITNESSGRAM scores as part of the school's annual yearly progress reports to the County Board of Education and parents.

*Dated*, \_\_\_\_\_, 2011.

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