



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

PO Box 47990 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

January 14, 2008

The Honorable Rosemary McAuliffe, Chair
Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee
Washington State Senate
PO Box 40401
Olympia, Washington 98504-0401

Dear Senator McAuliffe:

As chair of the Washington State Board of Health, I am writing to support Senate Bill 6042, which is scheduled to be heard by your committee this afternoon. This bill requires that each school district provide a daily recess period for elementary school students.

Experts say fresh air and play give students an edge in their school work. In addition, recess can provide children with emotional, social, and physical benefits. Play is an active form of learning that unites the mind, body, and spirit. Until at least the age of nine, children's learning occurs best when the whole self is involved. The senses of smell, touch, and taste, and the sense of motion are all important modes of learning for children. One study found that fourth-graders were more on-task and less fidgety in the classroom on days when they had recess, and hyperactive children were among those who benefited the most (Jarrett et al., 1998). Pellegrini and David (1993) found that children, especially boys, exhibited more fidgetiness and less concentration when their normal recess period was delayed.

Children permitted to have unstructured play with peers can develop the ability to understand others' points of view. This ability develops through learning the skills of cooperating, helping, sharing, and problem solving. Much of what children do during recess has the potential to aid the development of their social skills. During recess children can share culture (Bishop & Curtis, 2001), make choices, develop rules for play, and learn to resolve conflicts.

Children who lead sedentary lifestyles suffer increased health risks. Kraft (1989) and Pellegrini and Smith (1998) found that during recess elementary school children engaged in physical activity 59% of the time, with vigorous physical activity occurring 21% of the time. We know that physical activity improves general circulation, increases blood flow to the brain, and raises levels of norepinephrine and endorphins, all of which may reduce stress, improve mood, and induce a calming effect. It can also reduce unhealthy weight gain.

The Honorable Rosemary McAuliffe

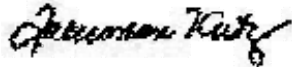
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It likely that children can have all of these benefits of physical exercise without compromising academic performance even if academic instruction time is reduced slightly to add time for physical activity.

Thank you for considering this critically important issue.

Sincerely,



Treuman Katz

Chair

cc: Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee Members
Senator Rosa Franklin
Washington State Board of Health Members
Ms. Christina Hulet, Governor's Executive Policy Office
Ms. Isabel Munoz-Colon, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Mr. Brian Peyton, Department of Health
Mr. Craig McLaughlin, Washington State Board of Health
Ms. Tara Wolff, Washington State Board of Health