

Physical Education Requirements Increased

SB 530 by Sen. Jane Nelson/Rep. Rob Eissler

- Beginning in 2007-2009 school year, requires 30 minutes daily of moderate to vigorous physical activity for grades K-5
 - Allows elementary schools to use structured recess to accomplish the physical activity requirement, but directs local school health advisory councils to consider and make policy recommendations concerning the importance of daily recess for elementary school students
- Beginning in 2008-2009 or when the TEA has established a coordinated school health program, requires middle school students to have 30 minutes of daily moderate to vigorous physical activity for at least 4 out of 6 semesters (or 135 minutes weekly)
 - Schools using block scheduling must provide 225 minutes per 2 week block
 - A student who participates in an extracurricular activity with a moderate to vigorous level of physical activity considered a structured activity under rules established by the Commissioner of Education may be exempted
- Requires annual physical fitness assessments for students in grades 3-12, beginning in 2007-2008
 - Assessments will be reported to the Texas Education Agency in summary form, omitting names of students or teachers;
 - Assessment results may be requested by parents
 - Data from the fitness assessments will be collected and analyzed to determine effectiveness and offer possible enhancements to school health programs.
- \$1.3 million will be utilized by the Texas Department of State Health Services for the purpose of conducting inspections of school cafeterias to achieve compliance with federal regulations issued as part of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004.

Texas will be the first state to comprehensively gauge students' physical health as part of a new fitness-focused law that targets growing waistlines.

Beginning in the 2007-2008 school year, the test will measure aerobic endurance, body fat, flexibility and muscle strength. To pass, students must score in the 80th percentile, or better than seven out of 10 peers, for their age and sex. Students who fail will not be penalized. Students with disabilities or a doctor's note don't have to take the test.

TEA officials expect to spend \$2.5 million to equip schools with Fitnessgram, a testing tool developed by Dallas physician Kenneth Cooper, founder of aerobics. The tool includes computer software to train teachers how to conduct the test.

Test results will help guide state research into possible links among physical health and student achievement, school attendance and discipline problems. Test results will be tallied by grade level, campus and school district.

About one-third of Texas' 4 million public school children are considered overweight, health data show, putting the state above the national average. Only two-thirds of the state's students were enrolled in PE classes in 2005.

PE requirements for high school students won't change. They still need 1 ½ years of PE to graduate.