

# Resolution to Require 50 Minutes of Unstructured Recess in Arizona Elementary Schools (K-5)

## Background and Summary

The percentage of children with obesity in the United States has more than tripled since the 1970s. Today, about one in five school-aged children is obese. Childhood obesity has immediate and long-term impacts on physical, social, and emotional health. For example:

- Children with obesity are at higher risk for having other chronic health conditions and diseases that impact physical health, such as asthma, sleep apnea, bone and joint problems, type 2 diabetes, and risk factors for heart disease.
- Children with obesity are bullied and teased more than their normal weight peers, and are more likely to suffer from social isolation, depression, and lower self-esteem.
- Childhood obesity also is associated with having obesity as an adult, which is linked to serious conditions and diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and several types of cancer.

Children and adolescents that participate in at least 1 hour of physical activity per day benefit from multiple health benefits, including lower risk for becoming obese. Schools provide a unique venue for youth to meet the activity recommendations. However, schools have been facing increasing challenges in allocating time for physical education and physical activity.

There is a growing body of research focused on the association between school-based physical activity, and academic performance among school-aged youth. A recent report from the CDC's entitled [\*The Association Between School-based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance\*](#) examined the association between school-based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance, including indicators of cognitive skills and attitudes, academic behaviors.

The CDC found that *"... across all 50 studies that they examined there were a total of 251 associations between physical activity and academic performance, representing measures of academic achievement, academic behavior, and cognitive skills and attitudes. Measures of cognitive skills and attitudes were used most frequently."*

During the 2017 Arizona Legislative Session, [House Bill 2082](#) was introduced which would have required all schools to have 50 minutes of recess per day from K through 5th grade. The Bill was passed by the House of Representatives but stalled in the State Senate.

Data from the CDC report provides evidence that such a bill, should it become law, would have a positive impact on academic achievement as well as physical activity. The report found that time spent in recess appears to have a positive relationship with children's attention, concentration, and/or on-task classroom behavior. All eight studies found one or more positive associations between recess and indicators of cognitive skills, attitudes, and academic behavior; none of the studies found negative associations between recess time and academic achievement.

## **AzPHA Resolution September 2017**

*Whereas, the Arizona Public Health Association recognizes that childhood obesity continues to pose an increasing public health threat; and*

*Whereas, children that are obese are at higher risk for having other chronic health conditions and diseases that impact physical health, such as asthma, sleep apnea, bone and joint problems, type 2 diabetes, and risk factors for heart disease; and*

*Whereas, children and adolescents that participate in at least 1 hour of physical activity per day benefit from multiple health benefits, including lower risk for becoming obese; and*

*Whereas, schools provide a unique venue for youth to meet the activity recommendations; and*

*Whereas, there is a growing body of research focused on the association between school-based physical activity, and academic performance among school-aged youth; and*

*Whereas, recess has a positive relationship with children's attention, concentration, and on-task classroom behavior;*

*Therefore, be it resolved that the Arizona Public Health Association supports a law in Arizona that would require all schools to have 50 minutes of recess per day from K through 5th grade and prohibit the withholding of recess for academic or behavioral reasons.*