

To: Assembly Committee on Children and Families  
From: Jennifer Kammerud, Legislative Liaison, DPI *JK*  
Date: January 29, 2014  
Re: **2013 Assembly Bill 609**

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is opposing Assembly Bill 609 (AB 609) as the bill will likely have the opposite of its intended effect and could actually be harmful to the provision of instruction in other areas.

The department supports efforts to increase the health and well-being of all students. Providing healthy meal and snack options, offering instruction in health and nutrition, increasing physical activity, and partnering with parents and others should all be part of a comprehensive effort that leads to healthy lifestyles and addresses the burgeoning issue of obesity.

Current law requires school districts to provide physical education instruction at least three times per week at the elementary grades. While the bill would require 30 minutes of physical education instruction every day it may not lead to more time over the course of the week, as many schools have 50 minute periods, and it would pose significant budgetary and instructional choices for school districts to ensure compliance.

A school district will have some of the following options under the bill if they don't want to, or are unable to, increase their spending in this area to hire additional staff, build additional gymnasium space, or extend the school day to accommodate the new requirement:

- Cut art, music, math, reading, science, or social study instruction.
- Eliminate or cut recess.
- Decrease lunch time.
- Increase class sizes for physical education
- Eliminate any preparatory time for elementary school teachers to accommodate assignment of additional classes in physical education.
- Eliminate the gymnasium as a multipurpose room available for use in other instructional areas or for use by the community during the school day.
- If exceeding the proposed requirement in terms of minutes, lower the amount of physical education instruction provided.

In particular, increasing class sizes for physical education has a number of serious implications for the quality of the instruction. Larger physical education class sizes are harder to manage and make instruction and student assessment more difficult, which would result in lower quality

instruction and less skill development. They are less safe due to decreased supervision and greater chance for injury in space-limited gymnasiums. Additionally, students are unable to maximize movement in larger classes due to the physical space constraints of elementary gymnasiums. Given Wisconsin's cold climate, the majority of physical education is taught inside elementary school gymnasiums. These gymnasiums vary in size with many smaller than 20 meters (65.6 feet) in length. As a result, increased class sizes could constrict movement in such a way that there is even less activity in a daily schedule than exists under the current requirement of 3 times a week.

On an administrative front, the bill creates some real problems for school districts. The bill requires physical education for 30 minutes to be taught each day school is held. Schools may not be able to comply with this regulation due to shortened schedules from delayed starts, professional development days, or community usage of the gymnasium.

Increasing physical education time alone is not going to solve the issue of obesity or prevent chronic illness. This bill may actually sacrifice quality physical education and instruction in other areas. In order to enhance physical activity among young children, the DPI supports active schools, which includes before and after-school physical activity, activity breaks in classrooms, active recess and quality physical education as part of a larger effort focused on healthy choices.