

Testimony on Senate Bill 334
An Act to Improve Quality Physical Education
Spoken January 31, 2006
David S. Troughton

Good afternoon. My name is David Troughton and I am Superintendent of Schools in North Reading. Additionally, I am a past president of the Mass. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. MASCD serves instructional and curriculum leaders in all roles in schools throughout the Commonwealth. As the chair of MASCD's committee on Influence and Advocacy, I coordinated the recent publication of "Fit for Learning: A Call to Action." A copy of this publication is made available to you.

I urge you to enact and fully fund Senate Bill 334. This bill will increase significantly the amount of time children and adolescents are engaged in physical education and establish high standards for physical education instruction in our schools.

It is critical that all students K-12 have access to high quality physical education programs. According to the Centers for Disease Control, "Positive experiences with physical activity at a young age help to lay the basis for being regularly active throughout life. Regular physical activity in childhood and adolescence improves strength and endurance, helps build healthy bones and muscles, helps control weight, reduces anxiety and stress, increases self-esteem, and may improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels."

The research tells us some startling facts:

- The increase in weight across all age groups in our nation has been accompanied by a growth in illnesses associated with excessive weight, including diabetes.

- Participation in physical activity declines strikingly with age
- In 2003, more than one-third of high school students did not regularly engage in vigorous physical activity
- Absenteeism and low productivity due to poor nutrition, inactivity and weight problems among students and staff place a heavy financial burden upon schools.
- Schools that offer intense physical activity programs see positive effects on academic achievement

As Superintendent of Schools, I see the direct impact of declining standards for physical education in our schools. Many school districts, including North Reading, have been forced to reduce or eliminate physical education programs due to budgetary concerns. As a result, this decrease in structured physical education contributes to a decline in overall health and wellness and sets the stage for childhood obesity, increased absenteeism and lower achievement.

Senate Bill 334 will work to establish rigorous standards for physical education in our schools. I urge you to support this bill and to provide the necessary funding to allow for its implementation. The health and wellness of our children are at stake.

Thank you

David Troughton