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American Heart Association and Shape America Release *Shape of the Nation* Report

THREE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PE IN NEW YORK

New York, NY— Today, the American Heart Association and SHAPE America released *Shape of the Nation 2016* on the state of physical education in each state. In New York City, we know our kids are not exercising their minds or their hearts as much as they need to stay healthy.

Despite research that shows physical activity improves brain function and student achievement, schools have reduced time in physical education, limiting the opportunity to learn critical skills and fundamental knowledge regarding physical fitness and health.

Shape of the Nation 2016 shows how New York is measuring up to national recommendations to keep kids physically active and healthy. The real impact of these troubling findings will be how they influence the long-term health and well-being of our 1.1 million students in ways many parents and schools do not yet realize.

KEY FINDINGS IN NEW YORK

Quantity Matters

- Our state standards do not meet national recommendations for the amount of time to be spent on quality physical education.
- And based upon recent studies by the City Comptroller and others, we know most schools are not complying with these state laws.

Quality Matters

- New York does not require PE teachers to be state certified/licensed and endorsed to teach physical education at the elementary level.
- The last time our state standards for PE were revised was in the late 90's, well before many of our students were even born.
- In New York City, we don't know what curriculum is being used to instruct student in physical education. The DOE endorses a curriculum but doesn't know if that is what is actually being used in schools.
- New York City provided funding in last year's budget to support PE implementation, but the program was only applied to 8 of the city's 32 school districts. All schools deserve quality PE.
- New York also allows for students to substitute their PE requirements and we are not sure how many students bypass the curriculum instruction as a result.
- New York does not require an assessment of gym and recreation space to make sure the school is providing a safe and appropriate location for physical education.
- There is also no limit to the student-teacher ratio. In New York City, some classes have close to 100 students at one time.

Equality Matters

Research shows that active kids learn better, so it is important that all children participate in physical activity every day, regardless of student fitness or ability and regardless of race or gender. Kids shouldn't miss out on the benefits of PE just because of their zip code. Heart disease and type 2 diabetes have a greater impact on communities of color, and longstanding racial inequities and socioeconomic challenges leave many schools without the resources to provide PE classes.

Kids shouldn't miss out on the benefits of PE just because of special needs either. Active kids learn better, so it is important that all children participate in physical activity every day, regardless of student fitness or ability. National recommendations include individualized plans for students with disabilities and emphasize that PE is focused on both physical activity and health education.

"Teaching children the 'how' and 'why' of exercise through physical education is vital to a heart-healthy life," says Nancy Brown, American Heart Association CEO. "The research is as clear as a school bell that quality time being active also improves kids' performance in other classes. Getting fit and fitting PE into the school day are non-negotiable."

Shape of the Nation 2016 is supported nationally by SHAPE America and Voices for Healthy Kids, an initiative of the American Heart Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The American Heart Association and SHAPE America are working to protect physical education to ensure our children get the day to day physical activity they need for strong healthy hearts and have the skills and knowledge to prevent chronic disease and be healthy adults. In New York City, the American Heart Association partners with the Phys Ed 4 All Coalition, working to make sure children are receiving consistent and quality physical education in all city schools.

The full report can be found here: <http://www.shapeamerica.org/advocacy/son/index.cfm>