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New York City Releases Inaugural Report on Quality of Physical Education in City Schools

NEW YORK, NY, August 31, 2016 – The New York City Department of Education has released the first report on the quantity and quality of physical education (PE) in the city’s schools. This report, which will be released annually, was requested by the New York City Council and the city’s Phys Ed 4 All Coalition as a means to update parents and community leaders on many aspects related to effective PE. The Phys Ed 4 All Coalition is comprised of community-based organizations, advocates, parents, educators, and health professionals dedicated to improving the quality and quantity of physical education in New York City schools. Last year the coalition secured a victory in the passage of Local Law 102 which mandates this new annual report.

As outlined in the law, the report is expected to outline specific information regarding PE programs, searchable by individual school, school district and borough. The report includes details on the average time spent per week on physical education instruction, the ratio of full-time certified PE teachers to students at the school, the type of space used for PE instruction, the number of students provided substitutions for PE requirements, among other criteria.

This report will provide parents, communities and elected officials with critical information about how PE in our city’s schools is currently functioning and where budgetary gaps lie. As the data reflect the status of PE programs from this past school year, the recent appropriation found in the FY17 budget to help improve PE should not yet be indicated in the report. This \$9M appropriation will allow city schools to hire new certified physical education teachers, thereby enabling physical education programs to be created in schools where none currently exist, or expand those that don’t yet quite meet the required metrics in state law.

The report can be found here:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/community/city/publicaffairs/Physical+Education+Reporting.htm>

According to state law, all elementary school students should receive a minimum of 120 minutes of quality physical education per week and students in the secondary schools should receive 90 minutes of quality physical education per week. Currently in New York City, many of our schools do not meet these requirements for quality physical education – and these standards don’t meet national benchmarks for adequate PE.

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

At a minimum, the Phys Ed 4 All Coalition believes that city schools must provide the basic, essential physical education required by state law. The Coalition was founded on the premise that comprehensive, quality PE is a right, not a privilege, and must be equally and consistently provided to every city student at all grade levels. The Phys Ed 4 All Coalition develops and implements targeted strategies related to community organizing, media advocacy and policy campaigns to support students, families and the teaching community with our unified goal in fostering generations with greater academic success and improved health outcomes.

“NYLPI has eagerly awaited the results of this study,” stated **Christine Appah-Gyamfi, Senior Staff Attorney for New York Lawyers for Public Interest**. “Since physical education is such an integral part of every child’s health and development, we will continue to assess and encourage citywide compliance of this law. We are particularly interested in the law’s provisions on inclusion and look forward to working with our partners to ensure that the DOE provides physical education for all of our city’s schoolchildren.”

Stephanie Gendell, Associate Executive Director for Policy and Advocacy for the Citizens’ Committee for Children added, “Research has proven that physical education helps children learn lifelong lessons in fitness and teamwork and also helps children succeed academically. We believe that this data, along with the administration’s significant budget investments, will provide us with the tools we need to ensure that every NYC public school student receives the high quality physical education classes they need and deserve. Specifically, this data will inform parents, the community, advocates and government of where we need to invest additional resources to at a minimum meet state regulations.”

“Each student has the right to receive, and the City of New York has the obligation to provide, quality consistent physical education regardless of neighborhood,” said **Michael Davoli, Director of Government Relations of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network**. “This report will be a powerful tool in helping New York City deliver on its obligation. We commend Mayor de Blasio and the other city leaders for being strongly behind this effort. We look forward to working closely with the city’s leaders to take further steps to protect the health of our young people and citizens in general and reduce cancer risk.”

“Bronx Health REACH is excited about the release of the Physical Education report,” stated **Charmaine Ruddock, Director of Bronx Health REACH at the Institute for Family Health**. “The quality and quantity of physical education as part of an overall Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program is important for the health and academic performance of students, and for too long many schools have struggled to meet the state and national standards for PE. Advocates for children’s health now have an additional tool for assessing PE in NYC schools. We look forward to working with the Phys Ed 4 All Coalition and the NYC Department of Education to ensure that all students receive sufficient PE in the Bronx and across the city.”

“The American Heart Association looks forward to reviewing the city’s report on PE and sharing the information broadly with parents, advocates and community leaders,” stated **Yuki Courtland, Chair of the American Heart Association’s Advocacy Committee in New York City**. “As the city begins to invest significant resources with the goal of improving the quality of PE for all students, this report will help us to direct those investments appropriately. We also hope to include more criteria in the future related to an effective PE program, such as an assessment of curricula used by each school and the professional development plan for PE instructors.”

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