

Thank you for your time and interest in supporting quality health and physical education (HPE) in Virginia. Right now we have an exciting opportunity to ensure that HPE is included as part of the Virginia Department of Education's standards of quality, characteristics of a graduate, and as a result of federal policy, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), standards of accountability. Below are several items that will be of help in guiding you through prepping to make public comment before the Virginia Board of Education.

Public Comment Template

GUIDE: You will have 3 minutes to provide public comment before members of the Virginia Board of Education. Remember to bring copies of your testimony. If you run out of time, jump to the conclusion and have the rest in writing. **This is your chance to tell your story.** Storytelling makes data real and is best when emotional, reliable, and credible. You want to make the members of the Board **feel** why Health and PE matters to you, to your children, to your students. Try to incorporate the following: Logic, Emotion, and Credibility (storyteller is a parent, a student, a doctor, a highly recognized educator).

Good evening, [*recognize the most senior member*], members of the Board:

My name is [*insert*] and I am a [*educator, parent, student, etc.*] at [*insert school, division, community, organization*]. Thank you for acknowledging the importance of student health and wellness in the Profile of a Virginia Graduate, and for maintaining the two year requirement for health and physical education.

[LOGIC: *Include 1-2 talking points from attached list.*]

[EMOTION: *In 2 minutes or less, connect the data to a real story, demonstrate tension - think good guy vs. bad guy.*]

[THE ASK: Health and physical education address the social, emotional, and physical health of all of our students. Please include health and physical education as a key indicator for school quality and student success in the ESSA implementation plan and *Profile of the Virginia Graduate* as it is an integral part of the educational experience for all students K-12.

Exercise their minds and keep them healthy. Include Health and Physical Education.]

[CLOSING - STATEMENT OF THANKS]

[INSERT NAME/SIGNATURE/AFFILIATION]

TALKING POINTS

GUIDE: Each of the talking points below can and should be used by educators, parents, students, etc. Select the talking points that best meet your personal experience and insert into letter template to customize your public comment before the Virginia Board of Education.

- **Health and PE (HPE) addresses the needs of the whole child.** Quality health and physical education programs provide kids what they need for a positive impact on their social, emotional, and physical health. HPE programs improve judgment, reduce stress, and increase self-esteem. Making sure all students are getting physical education is a critical part of keeping kids healthy.
- A Centers for Disease Control analysis concluded that physical education improves student attendance, test scores, participation and enthusiasm for other academic subjects, motivation to learn, and reduces discipline referrals. The research also illustrates that health and physical education can have a positive impact on cognitive ability, help kids avoid tobacco, and reduce their risk for insomnia, depression, and anxiety.
- **HPE are part of a high-quality education.** Numerous studies have demonstrated that physically fit children have higher scholastic achievement, better classroom behavior, greater ability to focus, and less absenteeism than their unfit counterparts.
- **HPE is Integral to Profile of a Virginia Graduate.** Ensuring that Virginia's students receive health and wellness instruction at all grade levels builds the skill foundation for students to develop positive relationships, healthy decision making, and opportunities for community engagement. Just as it is important to build the foundation for math and language arts, it is equally important to build the skills necessary to prevent risky behaviors and cope with daily relationship challenges. Time in safe learning environments is needed to develop and apply these skills, and to ultimately become respectful and successful citizens.
- In order to learn health related skills and explore their interests in personal fitness, Virginia's students need the time to learn the opportunities available, explore the variety of experiences, and understand the ways to make healthy decisions. This learning is now possible with the new Standards of Learning for health and physical education instruction. The opportunities to learn these skills from qualified professionals is essential.
- Having the two credits ([do we need to identify the credits](#)) in high school provides the chance for students to demonstrate their prior [skills and knowledge gained as a result of quality health and physical education from elementary school through high school](#) and show they are prepared for making the healthy decisions evident of community leaders.
- High school credits offer our students the opportunity to demonstrate their level of understanding of drug and alcohol use prevention and the time for increasing the learning as needed.
- **Health and PE are critical indicators for our children:** All kids deserve a chance to be healthy and succeed at school. And the fact is, healthy kids learn better. As Virginia develops its ESSA state accountability plan and report cards, daily physical education

should be included as a core component. With daily PE, we can keep kids' healthy and their minds in gear to do their best at school. And the benefits don't end there. Physical education has positive impacts on kids' physical, mental, and emotional health.

- ESSA focuses on the whole child and is yet another reason to include health as part of Profile of a Virginia Graduate.

Sample Public Comment/Letter of Support

GUIDE: This letter serves as a sample to show what public comment could look like following the template above and incorporating selected talking points.

Good evening, Madame Vice Chair, members of the Board:

My name is Fred Milbert and I am a retired physical education teacher in Prince William County, and past president of the Virginia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. Thank you for acknowledging the importance of student health and wellness in the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*, and for maintaining the two year requirement for health and physical education.

I believe it is very appropriate and timely that the Board of Education is looking seriously into the requirements that our high school graduates should meet when leaving and entering the workforce or higher education. In order for our students to enter the community and begin the challenges of civic responsibility, it is necessary to consider the need for relevant and complete education for our students. To ensure that our children are well-prepared for life, they need education experiences that support the wellbeing of the whole child, supporting their physical, mental and emotional health. With the ever-growing number of priorities competing for time during the school day, too many of our children have lost what was once a given: access to quality health and physical education.

The recent adoption of the Standards of Learning for health and physical education by the Board provides the access to strong health and physical education programs throughout the K-12 educational experience. When taught by quality, trained instructors, these learning experiences improve the health of our children and helps them perform better academically. A Centers for Disease Control analysis concluded that physical education improves student attendance, test scores, participation and enthusiasm for other academic subjects, motivation to learn, and reduces discipline referrals. The research also illustrates that health and physical education can have a positive impact on cognitive ability, help kids avoid tobacco, and reduce their risk for insomnia, depression, and anxiety.

Today's students face many extreme issues in the home and community; abuse, sex trafficking, relationships, bullying, depression and other challenges that they do not have the skills or support to handle successfully. Health education provides opportunities for relationship

development and interaction, critical thinking, collaborative decision making, and problem solving. However, this learning in health and physical education have been reduced in preference for academic goals. If the Board is truly committed to student improvement and preparing them for success in the workforce and support of the community, it is necessary to make time in the school day at all grade levels for teaching the social, mental and physical aspects of the whole child.

In short, active kids learn better, and quality health and physical education programs help ensure that our children are on their way to a healthier future.

You currently have an important opportunity to support healthier kids by supporting PE. As you convene the relevant stakeholders to develop and finalize Virginia's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) implementation plan, we strongly encourage you to include physical education as a key indicator for school quality and student success.

The new law includes important provisions and support to states and districts to ensure all children receive a "well-rounded" education, and unlike under previous law, PE is now an approved option to help meet that requirement. ESSA also gives states the flexibility to use Title I, Title II and Title IV funds to support PE programs. These changes reflect the growing consensus that PE is critical to student success. With the troubling trend of inactivity and health issues facing our children, including PE in our state's plan is an important way to improve the health and well-being of every Virginia's child — regardless of their zip code.

Health and physical education address the social, emotional, and physical health of all of our students. Please include health and physical education as a key indicator for school quality and student success in the ESSA implementation plan and *Profile of the Virginia Graduate* as it is an integral part of the educational experience for all students K-12.

Exercise their minds. Include PE.

Thank you for your consideration and for thinking of the health and well-being of our children as a critical building block of a successful education.

Fred Milbert

Past President, Virginia Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance