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Kids to get more physical activity in grades K-8

RALEIGH—Children in grades kindergarten through eighth grade are to get at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity during the school day, the N.C. State Board of Education decided today. The Board unanimously approved a revision to the state’s Healthy Active Children policy, putting the new requirement in place beginning with the 2006-2007 school year.

The 30 minutes of physical activity can be accumulated throughout the day, whether during physical education, recess, or in class through curriculum-based physical activities such as “Energizers” or “Take10!” The physical activity requirement compliments the schools’ physical education program but is not a substitute for it.

Most physical activity will not require additional resources. However, training and resources are being developed by multiple organizations.

The amendments to the Healthy Active Children policy were based on policy recommendations issued by the N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission’s Study Committee on Childhood Overweight/Obesity. The Department of Public Instruction led the effort, supported by partners such as the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services - Division of Public Health; advocacy groups such as N.C. Action for Healthy Kids; and the N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission, among others.

This is a wonderful day, not only for North Carolina, but for our children,” said Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, HWTF chair and member of the State Board. “Research shows there is a direct link between the health of a child and their academic success, and today we as a Board have shown our commitment to the development of the whole child.”

DHHS Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom asked the Board to require 30 minutes of daily physical activity at its March meeting. “Physical inactivity has tremendous human and economic implications,” Hooker Odom said. “Among North Carolina adults, physical inactivity currently costs over \$9.7 billion annually. Those lifelong patterns of inactivity begin in childhood. Requiring physical activity is going to make kids healthier and also improve their grades.”

Jimmy Newkirk, physical activity coordinator for the Division of Public Health, said, “The national recommendations for physical activity are that children should receive a minimum of 60 minutes daily, and up to several hours. Schools have now taken a major step forward in helping children reach that goal by getting half of their physical activity requirements at school,” Newkirk said. “But that’s only half—parents, families, organizations and communities also have significant roles to play in meeting kids’ need for at least an hour of physical activity each day.”

The revised Healthy Active Children Policy specifies that physical activity cannot be used as punishment. The policy already requires that each school district have a School Health Advisory Council. It also recommends that schools consider the benefits of and move toward 150 minutes of physical education for elementary schools and 225 minutes for middle schools. The State Board will establish an Ad Hoc study committee to study the feasibility of requiring specific amounts of physical education.

