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TO: District Superintendents of Schools
Superintendents of Public and Nonpublic Schools
Administrators of Charter Schools

FROM: Jean C. Stevens

SUBJECT: Physical Education: Addressing Critical Issues

The growing culture of overweight and obese Americans is not only a national public health crisis, but a threat to all children. According to the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted in New York schools, students are progressively becoming overweight. Asthma, diabetes and cardiovascular disease are some of the health complications suffered by our overweight students which often detract from their focus on learning. The Wellness Policy requirement of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act instituted this past July demonstrates the efforts made by the federal government to raise national awareness about providing adequate nutrition and physical activity for all students. This memo is designed to provide guidance on the means to address these critical issues facing New York State students through application of the New York State [Learning Standards for Health, Physical Education and Family and Consumer Science](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/cores.htm#PhyEd) at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/cores.htm#PhyEd> and Part 135 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/pe/pub/part135.pdf>.

In 1996, the Board of Regents adopted the Learning Standards for Health, Physical Education, and Family and Consumer Science. Each of the following three standards coupled with their related performance indicators is designed to provide students with healthy habits for lifelong wellness. The full text of the following standards can be accessed through the [NYSED Virtual Learning System](http://www.nysvls.org) at www.nysvls.org.

Standard 1: Personal Health and Fitness

Students will have the necessary knowledge and skills to establish and maintain physical fitness, participate in physical activity, and maintain personal health.

Standard 2: A Safe and Healthy Environment

Students will acquire the knowledge and ability necessary to create and maintain a safe and healthy environment.

Standard 3: **Resource Management**

Students will understand and be able to manage their personal and community resources.

Section 135.4 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education supports the learning standards and pertains to the design and implementation of physical education programs. As schools build a solid foundation for general fitness and healthy lifelong habits, daily instruction is required in grades K-3. For grades 4-6 the regulations require instruction for a minimum of three times per week. These regulations stipulate that students in grades K-6 must be provided instruction leading to the attainment of the learning standards for a minimum of 120 minutes per week. For grades 7-12, instruction must be offered three times per week one semester and two times per week the other semester, or a comparable time each semester if the school is organized in other patterns. The content standards and performance indicators in the New York State Learning Standards for Health, Physical Education and Family and Consumer Science coupled with these minimum time requirements must be reflected in the school district plan for physical education, pursuant to Section 135.4 (a) of the Commissioner's Regulations.

With the adoption of the learning standards, physical education has been elevated beyond the physical boundaries of the gymnasium and has become an integral part of a school's curriculum. The role of the certified physical education teacher becomes even more critical as students develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors that will enable them to maintain healthy habits for lifelong wellness. Research supports the use of movement and brain-compatible techniques to support the development of thinking skills in students.

At the elementary level, schools have demonstrated a variety of approaches in addressing the needs of a quality K-6 physical education program through an integrated approach to teaching and learning. Collaboration between the physical education teacher and the elementary classroom teacher can enhance a quality physical education program. Examples of this type of collaborative model are featured on the [NYSED Virtual Learning System](http://www.nysvls.org) at www.nysvls.org, the [New York State Academy for Teaching and Learning](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nysat/PhysEd/index_old.html) at http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nysat/PhysEd/index_old.html and the Department's website for [Curriculum, Instruction and Instructional Technology](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/home.html) at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/home.html>

The obesity crisis in our nation is a fact, and our students must have quality physical education programs as a part of the prevention process. Recent research is beginning to show a positive relationship between vigorous activity and improved academic performance. The inclusion of this collaborative and integrated approach to meeting the elementary physical education requirement is encouraged and should be reflected in the school district plan for physical education pursuant to Section 135.4(a) of the Commissioner's Regulations. Working together, all New York State students will be able to achieve academically and adopt active lifestyles in pursuit of a lifetime of wellness.

For additional information and technical assistance in developing quality physical education programs, please visit the [Department's physical education website](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/physed.html) at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/physed.html> .