



## About the Your Turn survey

SURVEY RESPONSES represent only the views of the self-selected sample of school board members, superintendents, and others who choose to participate in this monthly straw poll, by postal mail or e-mail or online at <http://www.asbj.com>. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of *American School Board Journal* or of its publisher, the National School Boards Association.

state affiliates could 'take up the torch' to rekindle the fire within."

A Wisconsin board member wants daily P.E. in elementary school and "maybe three days [a week] in middle or high school." The reader says competitive sports are no substitute for schoolwide P.E., adding: "I would prefer to keep P.E. and cut back on athletics [under] tough budgets."

"P.E. should be a critical program in our schools," says a Kansas superintendent. "But it must be skills based for all students, not just a throw-out-the-ball program for athletes."

One out of four of you wants to require some P.E., but not a daily regimen of it.

Exercising, learning new games and skills, and developing sportsmanship are all important, says an Illinois board member. "But [students] don't need P.E. class every day, and P.E. should not be graded. P.E. is not on the same level with academic subjects in life's importance."

Adds an Illinois superintendent: "Daily P.E. is not necessary. 'Adequate' physical exercise is. The two are not the same. Each student really needs an individual physical fitness plan and the time and supervision to carry it out."

Seventeen percent of respondents say schools should not require physical education but should stick to their core academic function. Among them was this Iowa board member who thinks the expectations placed on P.E. are too lofty.

"I don't think P.E., daily or

otherwise, will do anything to help prevent obesity in today's youth," the board member says. "Kids are overweight because they don't have good diets and they don't walk anywhere. Schools could quit spending money on parking lots and encourage students to walk.

"I have four children," the board member continues. "Three out of the four so far have opted out of P.E. in favor of taking academics. They saw no benefit to P.E. either."

A Michigan board member also sees the advantages of exercise—but not required P.E.

"Do not require P.E.—make it available before and after school, using facilities for aerobics, running, walking, and weight lifting," the board member says. "Make exercise fun. It could also be kept as an elective course."

## Letters

### Grasping the nettle

When I look at schools in the area, the ones that are the most respected, those that help the greatest percentage of their students obtain admission to top schools and provide scholarship assistance, are the ones with the highest test scores ("Right Task, Wrong Tool," February 2002).

It would be interesting to see author James Popham rank schools by his never-disclosed alternative methods. My guess is that the ones he found to be strongest would

also have high standardized test scores and the weakest would have low scores. But it would be interesting to see him "grasp the nettle" and actually devise and implement a better alternative.

Mark C. Trentacoste  
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### Who's rural?

I enjoyed the article on cheating in your April 2002 issue (Up Front, "What price plagiarism?"). I wholeheartedly agree that the school board in Piper was wrong in overturning a teacher's and principal's decision regarding the students' grades.

I only have one problem with the article. The first sentence starts off, "A rural Kansas school board ..." Twenty miles west of Kansas City is not considered "rural." We have a hard enough time out here in western Kansas getting our legislators in Topeka to listen to us. If you want "rural," come to the other end of the state.

Tracy Rogers  
School Board Member  
USD No. 315  
Colby, Kan.

### Every child, every day

There is plenty of data to support what quality physical activity can do for children (Your Turn, "We Ask: Should districts require daily P.E.?" March 2002) to enhance quality of life (in health terms) as well as academic achievement.

Leaving physical activity to

opportunities outside school is, in most communities, another situation where the rich get richer. Unsupervised play in the local streets and parks has become too risky for many parents.

Parents who want their children involved in structured activity programs have to pay, and pay dearly, for the chance to play. Families with more than one child will be forced to make hard decisions about disposable income.

School programs are one of the most equitable "delivery" systems of chances to be active for a lifetime—when the programs are good.

Creating a requirement for daily P.E. without accountability is not a good-sense decision. Several states, including Wyoming, New York, and South Carolina, to name a few, are developing models for ensuring quality programs are delivered. Every school-age student in the country deserves quality, daily physical education. Their health depends on it.

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