

## **Parents and Teachers Want Mandatory Health and PE Classes, Says Poll**

From *KidsHealth*

<http://www.momsteam.com/health-safety/parents-teachers-want-mandatory-health-pe-classes-says-poll>

According to a new survey, an overwhelming majority of parents and teachers want health classes and physical education to be mandatory parts of the school day. The problem is that a significant number of schools don't offer health classes. And many schools that do have health and PE classes are not devoting enough time to the subjects or teaching them effectively.

"Schools can play an important role in countering the obesity epidemic among U.S. youth," says Mary L. Gavin, MD, Medical editor of *KidsHealth*, which conducted the survey, and president of the Delaware chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

"Research shows many parents don't realize their children are overweight," Gavin says. "The average U.S. kid or teen spends more time in front of a computer, TV, cell phone, and video game screen each week than in school. Daily PE classes that get kids moving, and health classes that explain how to choose nutritious foods and appropriate portion sizes, can help kids make healthier choices." And, Gavin notes, "Studies show that kids who are physically active do better in school."

### **Other Survey Findings**

- Nearly every educator (99%) said all students should be required to take PE classes, and the same number said middle school and high school students should be required to take health classes. Slightly fewer educators (93%) said elementary kids should be required to take health classes.
- About 87% of parents said middle and high school students should be required to take health and PE; 78% said elementary students should be required to take health classes; and 92% said elementary students should be required to take PE classes.
- More than a fifth of educators (22%) said their schools do not offer health education. Nearly half (49%) said that the health classes that are taught are offered weekly or less frequently, and 27% said classes are 30 minutes or briefer.
- About half (47%) of educators and 27% of parents said they felt that health education at their schools is inadequate. Not having enough time devoted to the subject was the most common complaint among these educators.

### **PE: Not Enough, Little Structure, Few Resources**

Almost all educators (98%) said their schools offer PE, but 43% of educators and 32% of parents said PE at their schools is inadequate. Of those educators, most said that not enough time is devoted to PE and that it should be offered daily and throughout the school year. Some parents who said their school's PE programs are inadequate agreed with educators that not enough time was spent on the subject.

### **About the Poll**

*KidsHealth in the Classroom* anonymously surveyed 1,173 parents and educators via *KidsHealth.org*, Twitter, *KidsHealth in the Classroom*, and *KidsHealth* newsletters from January through March 2013. A total of 666 parents and 507 educators responded.