

Tennessee 2016 PA update and upcoming Physical Education Legislation

(In Spring 2016, state legislation was passed related to physical activity. This is unrelated to the elementary physical education legislation TAHPERD is promoting. Read below to learn about the differences.)

SB 1983, HB 2148 (Senator Bowling)

This legislation, passed in the 2016 legislative session, pertains to physical activity and is an addition to the “90 minute” physical activity law.

The bill specifically states:

- Kindergarten through grade one will be provided a minimum of three (3) fifteen minute period of non-structured physical activity per day;
- Second grade through sixth grade will be provided a minimum of two (2) twenty-minute periods of non-structured physical activity at least four (4) days per week;
- Seventh grade through twelfth grade remains the same, i.e., a minimum of ninety (90) minutes of physical activity per week.

Non-structured physical activity is defined as a “temporary withdrawal or cessation from usual school work or sedentary activities during which an opportunity for rigorous physical activity is provided.”

The intent of the bill was to provide a break for students from the classroom activities of sitting at their desks. Senator Bowling expressed concern that our students need periods of freedom, time that is totally unstructured, the concept of recess when she was a child.

In the beginning we thought physical education could count as one of those breaks from the rigors of the classroom; that proved not to be true. Bowling’s bill is designed specifically for non-structured physical activity--no brainbreaks in the classroom, no instruction of physical education, no requirements imposed on the students—just physical activity.

At the present:

DOE will be required to report to the legislature this year on the implementation of the Bowling Bill. Administrators are scrambling to adjust schedules, finding less minutes in the day for curriculum instruction, and in many cases decreasing time in art, music, and physical education to provide the necessary “recess” breaks of the Bowling Bill. The intent of the Bowling legislation was not to decrease physical education, yet physical education teachers are experiencing a reduction in their instructional time as administrators reduce instruction programs to provide “free” time for students.

Here is the conflict:

TAHPERD has been seriously involved for the last 2 years in proposed legislation to require a minimum of two (2) days of instructional physical education per calendar week for all students in elementary school, grades K-5, referred to as the Tom Cronan Bill for Elementary Physical Education. Confusion is spreading throughout the state as regarding the two. **See the table below for clarification of the differences.**

Sen. Bowling Physical Activity Bill (passed in legislation, 2016)	TAHPERD Sponsored Tom Cronan Act (2017)
1) PA legislation intended to ensure unstructured play for all children, i.e., recess	1) Stand-alone legislation, unrelated to PA; focuses on elementary physical education, 2 days per calendar week for 30-45 minutes per instructional class
2) Unrelated in all aspects to physical education	2) Legislation that addresses the high obesity rate and health of elementary children through the vehicle of quality physical education
3) Written and passed without any conversation or support from TAHPERD	3) TAHPERD written-and-sponsored legislation to ensure systematic elementary physical education taught by certificated physical education teachers

In summary:

The Bowling Bill for physical activity is NOT the same as the Tom Cronan Bill for elementary physical education.

They will NOT be presented in combination at the next legislative session.

TAHPERD did not write nor support the Bowling Bill for physical activity.

Please brief your administrators on the differences in these 2 bills and be sure they understand our support is for physical education, the teaching of skills for a healthy lifestyle.