

## The Tom Cronan Act for Elementary Physical Education enacted into law May 21, 2018

To the delight of TAHPERD, physical education teachers, parents and children across the state of Tennessee, in April 2018, the State Legislature passed the Tom Cronan Act ensuring 2 days per calendar week of physical education for elementary children, effective August 2019. The new Act requires that *"...each student in elementary school will participate in a physical education class that meets 2 times per week. The total physical education class time each school week shall be no less than 60 minutes. The class shall be taught by a licensed teacher with an endorsement in physical education or by a specialist in physical education."*

The 4 ½ year legislative journey culminated in unanimous passage in both the Tennessee House and Senate in April 2018. The American Heart Association (AHA) played a major role in helping this legislation clear every hurdle in the legislative process, joining with TAHPERD's legislative/advocacy committee in their patience and persistent pursuit of the goal. During the journey Tennessee had unfortunately risen to the #1 position nationally in childhood obesity.

Tennessee legislators were outstanding in joining the battle to lower this alarming statistic. There was unanimous agreement that elementary physical education is the place to begin addressing the health of children and that while all school extracurricular activities are valuable, it is physical education that directly impacts the health of a child.

Questions were raised regarding funding for staff, time restrictions, scheduling, and adequate number of certificated teachers to meet the new requirement for elementary physical education. The following addresses each of those areas:

**First**, will this legislation require tremendous increase in finances for school districts? BEP Funding for physical education is already in place in Tennessee's public schools, providing monies for 1 full time physical education teacher per every 350 students in all elementary schools. Thus, **funding already exists for necessary staff.**

**Second**, will school districts need to increase the length of the school day to meet the requirement of 2 days per week of physical education? Physical education fits nicely within the 6 ½ school day (as mandated by the Tennessee State Board of Education/Department of Education for academics). For Tier I and Tier II students, all requirements, including daily recess, special area classes of music, art, library/media center, computer and physical education are met within the 6 ½ hour school day.

Thus, **there is time within the existing school day for physical education.**

**Third**, will scheduling 2 days of instructional physical education into the current curriculum be a nightmare, if not impossible for many schools? TAHPERD has provided a scheduling committee to assist any and all school districts and/or individual schools with scheduling. Administrators only need to contact Andrea Burton, Executive Director of TAPHERD for assistance ([tahperd.ed@aol.com](mailto:tahperd.ed@aol.com)).

**By TAHPERD providing scheduling help, the administrative task is resolved.**

**Finally**, are there sufficient numbers of licensed and certificated physical education teachers? A statewide survey of elementary physical education teachers revealed that only 8 elementary schools in Tennessee did not have staff in place for physical education. Those schools are currently actively pursuing remediation of this issue. **The elementary physical education teachers are in place.**

**In summary, there are no barriers to providing 2 days per week of instructional physical education in the elementary schools of Tennessee.** With special thanks to the TAHPERD Advocacy/Legislative Chair, to the many members of TAHPERD who spoke to legislators, to American Heart in Tennessee, to Sen. Bill Ketron and Rep. Roger Kane, to Micki Yearwood, to Joan Cronan, and to Governor Bill Haslam .....because of you the future of Tennessee's children is brighter.