



Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales

# e-Bulletin

Tuesday, 27 January 2009 – Edition 30

## THIS WEEK'S THOUGHT – Di Giblin

Welcome back to the new school year, and already it has been an extremely busy

### STUDENT TRANSPORT SUBSIDY SCHEME

The NSW Government did a turnaround on the Student Transport Scheme and it was welcomed by parents in Public Schools, particularly those in rural and remote areas. Whilst this is a welcome relief for those families there still needs to be a thorough review of this scheme which currently blows out at \$490 million. It also needs to be recognized that the scheme doesn't clearly cater for the many and varied ways education is delivered in NSW and the school bus pass is limited in its use.

In a recent meeting with the Premier, the Federation expressed a view that bus passes should be made more relevant and should be restricted in their distribution to students attending their local most appropriate Public School. We called on the Premier to take a thorough look at this scheme particularly in light of a large percentage of the cost is transporting students to private schools across suburbs and towns.

### TEACHER AWARD SETTLEMENT AND STAFFING AGREEMENT

Parents were also glad to hear that the NSW government and the New South Wales Teachers Federation finally reached a settlement in regards to the wage dispute. During the break many parents contacted our office for continual updates in regard to this matter. This agreement sidestepped two days of Industrial Action by New South Wales teachers and gave students a positive start to the year. Details of the salary package and staffing agreement can be found at: <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/employment/memo/updatesalary.htm>. The NSWTF will formally consider the settlement on February 6.

### REES TO RAISE SCHOOL LEAVING AGE TO GIVE STUDENTS A BETTER CHANCE OF A JOB

The NSW Government will raise the school leaving age to ensure NSW students have a world-class education and improved opportunities to go to University or secure employment. From 2010 All students in NSW will complete Year 10. In addition if a student is under 17 and wants to leave school after Year 10, they will need to be in vocational training, an apprenticeship or paid employment for more than 25 hours per week.

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/school-leaving-age-rises-to-17/2009/01/28/1232818484428.html>

### March forth (4<sup>th</sup>) and celebrate P&C Day

In 2006, the Federation launched the first P&C day. This day was celebrated at the site of one of the first P&C Associations in NSW, Five Dock Public School.

The Federation had strongly lobbied for this special day as a way of recognising the efforts of local P&C associations. P&C Day is a way of providing an opportunity to promote the role of the P&C and to celebrate their outstanding contributions in support of public education.

P&C's epitomize the efforts of volunteers within our society – where individuals join together and work towards a collective goal. These efforts do not carry a personal benefit to the

individual nor do they carry a personal financial reward. The activities undertaken by our P&C volunteers are undertaken in order to benefit our local communities – as a collective benefit to all. Today P&C associations across the State contribute in excess of \$50 million to our local schools. In addition there are countless volunteer hours that provide valuable assistance and resources to our local schools.

More importantly the role of the P&C allows parents to have a say in how their local school is functioning and how best to meet the needs of their own individual community. P&C's are a place where the distilled wisdom of a local community can have real and positive impacts on how a school functions.

P&C Day is now an annual event, to be celebrated on the Wednesday of Week 6, Term 1. This year it will be celebrated on March 4<sup>th</sup>. We would encourage all P&C associations to mark this day on their calendar and to spare some time to congratulate yourself for your ongoing involvement.

Take care  
Di Giblin 2009.

## **PARENTS MAKE MOVES ON TOP SCHOOLS**

Parents are buying houses in areas close to desirable schools and intervening more than ever to ensure their children are positioned for success in their education, University of Sydney research has found.

The belief that bright children will do well at any school has been superseded with distrust in leaving anything to chance.

Anxious middle-class parents have become more proactive in making sure their children enrol in "the best" school, whether measured by academic or cultural standards.

Frustration had displaced any sense of entitlement Anglo-Australians once felt in sending their children to selective high schools, a tradition that could no longer "be handed down along with the family silver". This had given way to resentment with the growing role coaching colleges played in helping students, particularly those from Asian-Australian families, gain selective school entry.

Despite feeling that coaching colleges were beneath them and a form of "cheating", some Anglo-Australian families admitted they had "given in" and commissioned their services, or had drilled their children on past selective school entry test papers, even if only the once.

The findings are based on 1350 surveys and 63 interviews with parents of year 7 students. The researchers, Craig Campbell, Helen Proctor and Geoffrey Sherington, also examined Australian census data from 1976 to 2001 for their new book, *School Choice: How Parents Negotiate The New School Market In Australia*.

"A good government school was still the first choice for most people," Associate Professor Campbell said, "but a lot of people are feeling frustrated that it is decreasingly available to them."

"The school is focused on getting the kids into selective schools and there isn't much attention given to things like dance and sport," she said.

Working-class parents were generally more willing to respect their children's wishes by sending them to the same school as their friends.

"Parents feel they have to intervene more than they have in the past," Associate Professor Campbell said. "The pressure has really racked up."

Meanwhile, the NSW Department of Education was yesterday embarrassed by a series of newspaper advertisements which incorrectly stated classes for the new school year started next Tuesday instead of today.

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/parents-make-moves-on-top-schools/2009/01/27/1232818435409.html>

## AMA SEEKS SEX LESSONS FOR 10-YEAR-OLDS

Explicit sex education could be compulsory for children as young as 10 under radical proposals to curb Australia's "alarmingly high" rate of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection.

The Australian Medical Association's state budget submission, obtained by *The Sunday Age*, urges that mandatory, comprehensive sex education be introduced into all state schools. Topics such as anal sex, mutual masturbation and date rape would be part of the curriculum, and terminology such as "f--k" and "blow job" would be used in classes. The AMA also wants graphic pictures of infections, such as herpes and genital warts, to be shown to warn pupils of the dangers of unprotected sex.

Opponents fear the classes could "traumatise" young children who are not emotionally equipped to understand explicit material.

However, the AMA says a frank approach is urgently needed as the incidence of chlamydia among 15 to 19-year-olds has doubled in five years. Gonorrhoea and syphilis are also on the rise and the AMA says 16 per cent of 16 to 19-year-old girls say they have had an unwanted pregnancy.

Victoria has an ad hoc system of sex education, with the content and timing left to individual schools. Some offer comprehensive programs from late primary school and others leave any discussion until year 10. Private schools are under no obligation to teach sexual health classes.

Victorian AMA vice-president Zoe Wainer said it was too late to begin sex education after children were sexually active, arguing it must be taught before puberty.

"We need to stop pussyfooting around with language," Dr Wainer said. "We need to make it really clear what we're talking about. If we're discussing the risk of sexually transmitted infections through fellatio, we need to make sure that these young people understand we're talking about blow jobs.

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/ama-seeks-sex-lessons-for-10yearolds-20090110-7e1m.html>

## HEAT DANGER IN SCHOOLS

Low-emission gas heaters being installed in NSW classrooms have been found by the NSW Health Department to produce high levels of nitrogen dioxide, a poisonous gas known to induce asthma attacks and respiratory problems.

The Education Department said last week it had not seen the study, despite the research being completed three years ago.

The Government boasted in 2006 that it was replacing old blue-flame heaters with a so-called low-nox model. But both types are unflued, so gas is released into the classroom rather than pumped outside.

Based on testing in classrooms where ventilation standards were not met, the study found "the highest concentrations of nitrogen dioxide were associated with both low-nox and standard heaters, irrespective of any maintenance policy".

It is the first time NSW Health has clearly acknowledged the risks posed by unflued gas heaters, despite them being banned in Victoria and South Australia, and despite many scientific studies warning of the potential hazards.

They emit carbon monoxide at levels that can cause headaches and drowsiness, carcinogenic formaldehyde and nitrogen dioxide, which is associated with increased rates of asthma, coughs and colds.

NSW Teachers Federation president Bob Lipscombe said: "It's time the Government took the health of teachers and students seriously and stopped installing these unflued gas heaters."

Despite the report being completed three years ago, a spokeswoman for Education Minister Verity Firth said her department had "not yet seen a full copy".

"Once it has been received, the Department of Education will consider it closely in collaboration with NSW Health," she said.

"Learning and health are being compromised by a Government that is more fixated on the budget bottom line than the wellbeing of students in public education."

Unflued heaters were installed at many schools last year, including Kelso High School in the Central West, where a teacher was taken to hospital after passing out during class when a malfunctioning heater caused carbon monoxide poisoning.

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/heater-danger-in-schools/2009/01/03/1230681813808.html>

## ONE IN THREE INDIGENOUS KIDS FAIL TEST

The rate of illiteracy among Aboriginal children has been underestimated, with the first uniform national literacy tests showing the proportion of indigenous eight-year-olds unable to read is significantly higher than previously thought.

A detailed report of the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy, released by education ministers, shows about one in three indigenous students in Year 3 failed to meet a minimum standard in reading.

But the 2007 report says one in five indigenous students in Year 3 failed to meet the reading benchmark.

For the first time, students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in every state and territory sat the same literacy and numeracy tests in May.

Previously, each state and territory held its own tests in Years 3, 5 and 7, with the tests moderated to enable comparisons nationally.

The first NAPLAN results suggest differences between the tests held in the states and territories have masked the extent of illiteracy among indigenous children.

Among indigenous Year 3 students, the Northern Territory reported 40 per cent met national benchmarks in reading last year, but this fell to 30 per cent this year.

Similarly in Queensland, 87 per cent met the reading benchmark last year, falling to 66 per cent this year, while 81 per cent of West Australian students met the minimum standard last year, but only 57 per cent did so this year.

The trend continued in the Territory and Western Australia among Year 5 indigenous students, with only 26 per cent meeting reading benchmarks in the Territory compared with 40 per cent last year, and 52 per cent meeting the minimum standard in Western Australia compared with 72 per cent last year.

The proportion of indigenous students meeting the numeracy benchmarks tended to improve across Years 3, 5 and 7.

The NAPLAN tests are viewed as a more rigorous indicator of students' skills, enabling a better comparison across the nation than the tests conducted in previous years.

"It remains of great concern that the data shows indigenous student achievement is significantly lower than for non-indigenous students in all areas tested and all jurisdictions," Mr O'Connor said.

He said the test results enabled the federal Government, for the first time, to look at state and territory results to get a better understanding of which areas needed a helping hand in meeting their challenges.

West Australian Education Minister Elizabeth Constable announced a support package for state teachers and principals worth \$500,000 to assist students in becoming more familiar with the NAPLAN tests. Dr Constable said the package would supplement the \$4.67 million announced last Wednesday to improve literacy and numeracy skills in the state.

The program includes \$1.5 million for primary schools to implement a whole-school approach to literacy; \$1.2 million until 2010 for a pilot program using paraprofessionals to help students; and \$750,000 to develop a resource kit for teachers, concentrating on grammar, punctuation and spelling.

He said programs launched in October targeting students at the start of school and campaigning on school attendance would help improve the achievements of indigenous students.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24835968-2702,00.html>

## MORE SCHOOL TESTS NEEDED, SAYS REPORT

Student performance in external tests is the new "bottom line" in education on which schools and teachers will increasingly be judged, a new policy paper from the Australian Council of Educational Research says.

Governments could no longer justify their performance in education in terms of the amount of new money they spent, the number of extra teachers hired or the range of new computers provided to schools, the author of the ACER paper, Andrew Dowling, said.

The move towards more standardised testing was a response to the relatively poor return on trillions of dollars invested internationally on education each year. Despite big spending on education, student performance in international literacy and numeracy tests had not improved over the years.

"Today, educators need to show how they have transformed current and new dollars into student achievement results," Dr Dowling said. "Output measures, particularly those related to student achievement, are the new bottom line."

Dr Dowling, an ACER research fellow, advocates Australia's move towards a national testing regime and proposals for wide reporting of student results to allow comparisons between schools.

ACER has benefited from many Federal Government contracts over time. Dr Walker said the Government had not commissioned this research.

Australia does not attach penalties to poor performance in student tests, as is done in the US education system, but Dr Dowling said the architecture was in place, to a greater degree than in the US, for individual schools to be compared on national tests. "There needs to be more evidence that rewards and punishments are actually working," he said.

Dr Dowling said the US education system had combined a faith in the free market with its emphasis on measuring student test results. "The efficient operation of any market requires good information and this is exactly what student testing provides," he said.

"The idea that market forces can advance society much more effectively than government intervention is, in fact, one of the major reasons behind the introduction of student testing on a large scale."

The *Herald* yesterday reported that the head of the Federal Government's National Curriculum Board, Barry McGaw, would head a global initiative, run by technology companies Microsoft, Intel and Cisco, to improve international testing of student skills such as literacy and numeracy.

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/more-school-tests-needed-says-report/2009/01/14/1231608794608.html>

## INDIGENOUS STUDENTS WIN SA MERIT AWARDS

More indigenous students have won merit awards in South Australia, highlighting the state's success in keeping more Aboriginal children in school to year 12, education authorities say.

Five indigenous students received at least one award for an outstanding achievement in a year 12 subject in 2008, up from just three last year.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith said 133 Aboriginal students were awarded their South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) this year, for successfully completing year 12.

The minister said the increase in merit awards and SACE qualifications for Aboriginal students reflected the commitment of their teachers and schools.

"Each one of these students was successful because they were inspired to succeed through a supportive teaching environment where they were encouraged to develop skills relevant to something they were passionate about," Dr Lomax-Smith said on Monday.

"I am delighted to see so many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their SACE, giving them the best start towards a successful future."

The improved figures came as Acting Prime Minister Julia Gillard pledged to pump \$2.3 billion into indigenous education, saying she was determined to close the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous students.

Ms Gillard, who is also federal education minister, said addressing disadvantage was a higher priority for the Rudd government than an indigenous bill of rights, as proposed by Aboriginal leader Pat Dodson.

"There is a big gap in life expectancy, in educational attainment, between indigenous Australians and non-indigenous Australians," she said.

"That is our focus, not a bill of rights, but practical action to close the gap."

"This year we have seen that these very successful merit students achieved their results through a genuine passion for what they were studying," Dr Kilvert said.

<http://news.theage.com.au/national/indigenous-students-win-sa-merit-awards-20081229-76g9.html>

## **AUSTRALIA SET TO BECOME FIRST CHOICE FOR INDIAN STUDENTS**

Over the past five years, the number of Indian students on an Australian student visa increased from 13,000 students to 85,026, showing a massive upsurge in the trend to choose Australia over any other international destination.

While the number of students in the US increased by 13 per cent last year, it is traditionally the most popular choice for Indian international students. In comparison, the number of Indian students attending Australian universities increased by 51 per cent over the same period.

Kelly Raj, educational counsellor with the Australian high commission in New Delhi, said the migration prospects, excellent education, cheaper cost of living and lesser fees are the attractions for Indian students to move to Australia.

"The quality of education offered in Australia, along with the nation's open, friendly, multicultural society, generous work rights (students can work for up to 20 hours a week during

their course and full-time during holidays), potential for migration, and exposure to research facilities have combined to boost the numbers," he said.

The most popular choices of courses for the Indian students are Vocational Education and Training (VET)-based courses, which involve management, commerce, engineering, food, hospitality, and personal services, according to figures from the Australian Education International.

Admission figures also show that the number of international students applying for VET courses in Australia doubled from 2007 to 2008, and this has largely been attributed to lower course fees in Australia than the US, the UK or Europe.

<http://www.visabureau.com/australia/news/30-12-2008/australia-set-to-become-first-choice-for-indian-students.aspx>

## FAQS

### Q: What is a P&C Association?

**A:** A P&C Association is a school-based organisation with membership open to parents, teachers, students and interested citizens. P&C Associations are sometimes known by other names, like infants/parent clubs. The name does not matter. The important thing is that the school parent organisation meets the requirements set out in the Education Act 1990.

### Q: What other objectives can school parent organisations have?

**A:** Federation also suggests that each school parent organisation ensures that its bylaws contain the following objectives:

- To participate in the activities of the school and communicate with all members of the school community;
- To co-operate with the activities of the Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales and its District and Regional Councils; and
- To do such other things that may promote the interests of public education.

The Department of Education and Training issued a statement "The Partnership Between Schools and Established Parent Bodies" in February 1998 outlines the parent organisation's role in providing "a forum in which parents can develop their partnership with the school and articulate their aspirations for their children's education."

### Q: Do school parent organisations have to be called P&C Associations?

**A:** No. The Education Act refers to school parent organisations as P&C Associations and "kindred associations". Kindred associations are often known as Mothers' Clubs, Infants' Clubs, Parents' Clubs, School Community Groups or other names.

Kindred associations have equal status and purposes as a P&C Association and may affiliate with P&C Federation. Ladies' Auxiliaries are usually subcommittees of P&C Associations and should not be viewed as "kindred associations"

## PRINCIPALS FIGHT TO HIRE WHO THEY WANT

PRINCIPALS will keep fighting for more autonomy to hire teachers after the State Government backed down from its decision to give them more control.

The NSW Teachers Federation signed a three-year staffing agreement last week which protects the transfer system that allows teachers to move to more desirable locations after serving time in a regional area.

As part of the agreement, the State Government has retained preliminary arrangements it introduced last April, which allow principals to alternate between advertising teacher vacancies and accepting teachers at the top of the service transfer list. A plan to phase out service transfers from next year has been abandoned.

The president of the NSW Secondary Principals Council, Jim McAlpine, said he was pleased the dispute had been resolved, removing the threat of a two-day teacher strike when students returned to school later this week, but he would continue to lobby for principals to have choice once the staffing agreement ended in three years.

While service transfers "should be part of the mix", Mr McAlpine said, "there should be greater opportunity for local selection". He said the federation's acceptance of the staffing arrangements introduced last year meant principals could now advertise some teaching positions without fear of retribution from the union.

The former education minister, John Della Bosca, and the Director-General for Education, Michael Coutts-Trotter, said last year that they would not back away from a decision to allow school principals to overlook low priority teacher transfers and advertise for staff from 2010.

But a long-running industrial dispute with teachers forced the Government's hand last week when it reversed its decision.

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/principals-fight-to-hire-who-they-want/2009/01/26/1232818339459.html>

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

### **LOCAL SCHOOL OFFERS AUSTRALIAN PROGRAM**

Local students can now get an Australian high school education and take Australia's college entrance examinations without leaving Shanghai due to a new program offered by a local school.

The private Gold Apple Bilingual School said yesterday that it would begin enrolling students in courses of the Western Australia Certificate of Education, the credential given to students who have completed Year 11 and Year 12 of their secondary school in the state of Western Australia.

All the textbooks and teachers on the course are from Australia. The course is designed to prepare local students for future study abroad.

Thousands of students are sent back to China every year as they are not accustomed to overseas studies, said school president Wu Yun.

Students of the program may also take the Tertiary Entrance Examination at the Gold Apple school. TEE is the standard academic examination for secondary students completing Year 12 in the Western Australia.

Students of the program can also apply for universities in other countries apart from Australia. The WACE and TEE system is recognized by more than 100 top universities including Cambridge, Stanford and Yale, and all 42 universities in Australia.

"We aim to diversify education opportunities for locals," said Wu.

"The number of local students studying in Australia for the second half of this year went up by 30 percent," said Xu Jianwen, educational department director of the Australian Consulate-General in Shanghai.

<http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/?id=383802&type=Metro>

## **AUSTRALIA WINS THE STUDENT VOTE**

Waheed al Marzooqi obtained a bachelor's degree in quantity surveying at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane.

Six times more Emiratis are studying in Australia now than in 2002, the Australian government has revealed.

A total of 1,262 Emiratis enrolled at universities, vocational training institutions, language schools and other institutions in Australia in the first six months of this year, compared with 204 six years ago.

Officials say Australia is seen as more welcoming to Muslims than some other countries in the post-September 11 world. It does not hurt that the country is famed for its sunny climate and scenic beaches.

"As more students go, word spreads and there are recommendations from students who have been there."

Mrs Troon said Emiratis felt "comfortable" in Australia because it was "a multicultural environment". Also, she said the fact many Emiratis visited Australia on holiday encouraged students to apply to study there.

Fees are generally lower than in rival countries such as the US and the UK, although most Emiratis studying overseas travel on scholarships from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research or major employers.

"Australians are welcoming. There's an interest in people from abroad that may not be as much in other parts of the world," she said, adding that an International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding had been set up at the University of South Australia in Adelaide.

He said students who completed their courses and returned to the UAE with Australian qualifications were often promoted rapidly. "If you graduate from overseas, especially from Australia, you have a better chance," he said. "We can take ideas from the West to our country and we can implement these ideas."

"The people were very friendly and welcoming. They like foreigners coming from outside to their country. I never had any bad experiences," he said.

However, he said it took several weeks to become accustomed to the "more open" culture in

Australia. He added that there was still a lack of awareness in the UAE about the value of Australian qualifications.

"People don't really know about the Australian background because not a lot of students have graduated," he said. "It needs three or four years to be recognised in the region."

<http://www.thenational.ae/article/20081202/NATIONAL/678070388/-1/NEWS>

### **STEWART HOUSE DAY FRIDAY MAY 8<sup>TH</sup> 2009**

Stewart House has a proud 78 year record of providing short term respite care for over 1,800 public school children in need of a break from their current circumstances each year. It has survived only because of the very generous support of NSW public school staff and school communities who have adopted Stewart House as their No. 1 charity. Show your support by wearing a Stewie the Dolphin SOS tattoo or purchasing a Stewie the Dolphin Keyring. Order forms are available at [www.stewarthouse.com.au](http://www.stewarthouse.com.au)

### **INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION OPENS DOORS**

Education opens doors to everyone. Education provides us with the opportunity to learn new skills and to meet new people in order to share ideas and discover and develop new concepts. International education opens doors exponentially; it opens those limitless numbers of doors to possibilities perhaps never before dreamed of or imagined by those who walk through those doors.

What is international education? It encompasses many things and takes many forms but it's really all about studying abroad—going to another country to live, work, and learn. It's about entering into a culture and social and professional milieu different than our own, and it's about stepping out of our every day routine or our comfort zone to learn about others, and by so doing, to learn more about ourselves and our communities. International education can range from a two-week training program or event abroad to a multi-year PhD degree program.

Each year millions of individuals travel to countries abroad to learn another language, to pursue education, to exchange ideas, to receive specialized training, or to do all of these. Other individuals don't leave their homes, schools, or communities, but are able to reap some of the rewards of international education by taking advantage of the Internet, books, stories of travelers from their communities, and lecturers and others to bring the outside world into their homes. They all share in being a part of international education, or the global school—planet école.

Many famous and successful people from around the world have reaped the benefits of international education. The famous historian Ibn Khaldun and the famous traveler Ibn Battuta are just two examples of Arabs who were reaping the benefits of learning, studying, traveling, and writing abroad. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton earned a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship to study at Oxford University in the United Kingdom. Former UN secretary general and 2001 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Kofi Annan, has described in presentations his experiences in both undergraduate and graduate studies in the U.S. Hundreds of thousands of Yemenis in all walks of life have also lived and studied abroad, and many are now influential in their chosen professions here in Yemen and abroad.

So how have these and others been able to reap the rewards from international education? The path isn't always easy or short, but fortunately, many of them have a lot to share about the process and experience, and many can describe how the first door that opened to them led to

more doors both at home and abroad. As a professional working in international education for almost twenty years, I've met thousands of international exchange participants from all walks of life and received hundreds of e-mails from them as they travel abroad for education and exchange, whether high school, university, or other higher and professional opportunities. The universal feeling among those who traveled abroad has been, and continues to be, "It was the best experience of my life."

<http://www.yobserver.com/culture-and-society/10015637.html>

## **STUDIES: SCHOOLS NOT PROVIDING ENOUGH PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Despite a childhood obesity crisis and state regulations on the amount of physical education students receive, most elementary schools on [Long Island](#) and across the state are not providing enough P.E. classes, according to two studies and educators who cite a lack of time, space and teachers along with competing demands of academics.

Experts say the state fails to enforce its regulations on physical education - which have been largely unchanged for 70 years - and the state says it looks into noncompliant districts only when parents complain or schools request help.

"I think they're cheating children," said Dr. David Satcher, U.S. surgeon general from 1998 to 2002 and founder of Action for Healthy Kids, which aims to address childhood obesity. "I think the schools should be reminded that children who are physically fit do well academically. When schools decide they don't have time for physical education, they're really defeating their own purpose."

A teacher's union-sponsored survey last year of 628 P.E. teachers statewide found that 20 percent said children in grades K-3 were getting their required 120 minutes of P.E. per week.

Audit finds noncompliance

With 32 percent of American children and adolescents overweight or obese, it's crucial schools offer more P.E. time, Satcher said.

The state Education Department requires that students in grades K-3 participate in P.E. every day, for a total of at least 120 minutes weekly. In grades 4-6, students must have at least 120 minutes spread over three days a week. In grades 7-12, students must have P.E. at least three times a week one semester and twice a week in the other semester.

Starting this school year, the department is requiring schools outside New York City to include weight and body mass index - a reliable indicator of total body fat - on students' health records.

But the rules do little to combat childhood obesity when there are no consequences for not complying, experts say.

Jonathan Burman, a state Education Department spokesman, said officials expect districts to follow the law. About twice a month, state officials learn of a noncompliant district through a parent's complaint or a school asking for help, he said. "We find that it is best to work with them to win compliance," he said. "The goal is not to punish schools, but rather to work with them to help meet the state's requirements."

Smithtown Superintendent Ed Ehmann said the biggest hurdles schools face are space and personnel. Many local officials say they don't have the gym capacity to schedule daily P.E. classes for elementary school students.

New York schools are not alone. "It's happening in every state," said Dr. John Ratey, a clinical associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. "The laws are being passed and schools are trying to get out of it saying they don't have enough space."

[http://www.newsday.com/news/printedition/longisland/ny-liphys256012039jan25\\_0,2764179.story](http://www.newsday.com/news/printedition/longisland/ny-liphys256012039jan25_0,2764179.story)

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