

*Note: This is a sample op-ed you can use for inspiration. Please consider your own stories and experiences as a way to personalize the op-ed. If your state or campaign is actively pursuing policy changes please include those in the op-ed.*

My [elementary/middle/high] school gymnasium. It's where my physical education (PE) teacher showed me how to position my arms just right so my free throws would swish into the basketball hoop, and where I learned how to spike a volleyball across the net. It's also where I learned the importance of teamwork, whether it was I who was pulling the weight as the captain or taking a backseat role so others with stronger talents could take the lead. I still implement many of those lessons - the importance of physical activity, good nutrition and collaboration - in my life all these years later.

But I'm afraid the same opportunities that were afforded to me may not be available to my own child.

These days, kids aren't getting enough structured PE. Schools, under so much pressure to have students perform well on standardized tests, often limit access to or even drop PE and health courses to devote more time for these tests. But by doing so, they could actually hurt the very kids they're trying to help.

**[INSERT ASK HERE IF THERE IS ONE.]**

Studies show that regular physical activity, especially in schools, can improve academic performance and cognitive ability. Kids who move their bodies more perform better in math, reading and, yes, even standardized tests. For these reasons, it's evident that the benefits of daily physical activity complement class time instruction rather than take away from it.

The good news is that there are positive solutions for kids across the country and right here in [STATE]. School districts are implementing recommendations from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the American Heart Association (AHA) to ensure students get at least 30 minutes of exercise each school day. For some school districts that face tight budgets, parents, teachers, community organizations and even students are working with their school boards to find more resources to increase the time spent in PE.

Investing in PE is investing in the long-term health and wellbeing of our kids. The benefits of providing children and teens with 150 minutes or more of weekly physical activity go far beyond increased scores on standardized tests. It's the foundation for better physical and mental health, prevention of chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease and hypertension, and improved quality of life.

Teachers, neighbors, fellow parents: it's up to us to make sure schools are providing our kids with the proper physical education classes to grow up resilient, smart and strong. If we want our

kids to have success in the future, we must Exercise their Minds™ and protect PE in schools nationwide. Join me in standing up for the health of our children and supporting physical education in schools.

**[REITERATE ASK HERE IF THERE IS ONE.]**