

Mr Jonathan O'Dea MP  
Chair  
Public Accounts Committee  
Legislative Assembly  
Parliament of New South Wales  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

MT14/225

Dear Mr O'Dea

I write in response to your letter of 26 February 2014, regarding the Auditor-General's Performance Audits October 2011 – March 2012 *Report No 222: Physical activity in government primary schools*.

Please find attached the Department's response to questions raised by the Public Accounts Committee.

The Department is currently implementing the Auditor-General's recommendations for physical activity in government primary schools, and is committed to delivering quality service that meets the dynamic needs of students and their school communities.

Yours sincerely



Dr Michele Bruniges AM  
**SECRETARY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITIES**  
21 March 2014

**Follow up of the Auditor-General's Performance Audits October 2011 – March 2012  
Report No 222: Physical activity in government primary schools**

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1. ***Outlined in your Submission as actions against Recommendation 1, could the Department provide an update on its plans to include a section on physical activity in the Annual School report process?***

Decisions about what will be included in Annual School Reports are currently under discussion as the Department is developing a new accountability model for NSW government schools. It is proposed that if a school includes strategies to address Physical Activity into their school plan, it will be reported in the school's annual report.

2. ***Will implementation of the proposed Physical Activity Continuum be mandatory for all NSW government primary schools?***

No, the proposed Physical Activity Continuum will not be mandatory, but will be encouraged for all NSW Government primary schools. Consistent with the Local Schools, Local Decisions reform agenda, the *Physical Activity Continuum* is being provided to schools to inform the decisions that principals make when deciding how best to meet the individual learning needs of their students in their school community. Similar to the *Literacy and Numeracy Continuum*, it is intended that the *Continuum* will support teachers in assessing and differentiating learning to enhance individual student development in physical activity and inform whole school decisions relating to physical activity initiatives.

The NSW Board of Studies and Teacher Educational Standards (BOSTES) Physical Education, Personal Development and Health (PDHPE) syllabus is mandatory in all NSW government schools. The *Physical Activity Continuum*, developed by the Department, is consistent with and compliments the syllabus and provides a standardised diagnostic tool for teachers to identify expected age level expectations for physical activity.

When implemented the *Physical Activity Continuum* will track individual student progress relating to physical activity including the knowledge, understandings, skills and attitudes regarded as being critical to success in physical activity and will map how critical aspects develop through the years of schools by describing observable learning outcomes.

3. ***Regarding the identification of needy schools. Can you provide an update on progress in implementing this recommendation? Specifically, have the schools been identified and if so, can you provide information on which schools were identified?***

The list of 100 government primary schools that are most in need of targeted assistance to meet the mandatory physical activity requirements will be finalised in April 2014.

Extensive work has been undertaken in preparation for this. During 2013, the Department gathered data on the involvement of government schools in a variety of activities including sports courses, knockout competitions, the Premier's Sporting Challenge and swimming schemes with a view to identifying those schools with the lowest participation levels.

In February 2014 the Department surveyed all Schools for Specific Purposes, primary, infants and central schools to identify the amount of planned and actual time spent on moderate to vigorous physical activity. This data is currently being analysed and will inform the list of 100 schools to be finalised in April 2014.

**4. *Can the Department provide a progress update on the Physically Active Schools website?***

The Physically Active Schools website is being created in line with the Department's review of its existing intranet site and is on track for completion in February 2015.

Work to date on the Physically Active Schools website has included:

- an audit of the Department's existing resource materials, professional learning opportunities and advice relating to physical activity; and
- a survey of 100 government primary school teachers on possible content and layout for the website.

The Department is currently developing content for the website including:

- the identification of best practice and exemplar physical activity programs for young people;
- strategies and information on policy;
- guidelines and actions for increasing physical activity opportunities;
- links to Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines;
- teaching resources;
- teacher professional learning courses;
- information on physical activity within the context of the NSW Board of Studies and Teacher Educational Standards (BOSTES) Physical Education, Personal Development and Health (PDHPE) curriculum, school sport, other key learning areas;
- information on encouraging physical activity during breaks, including recess, lunch and also extra curricula activities; and
- case study videos that demonstrate best practice approaches to physical activity.

**5. *How will best practice ideas be identified and how will schools be encouraged to implement them?***

Schools will have access to a number of resources that highlight best practice. These are being identified in consultation with principal associations and key sporting stakeholder organisations. In addition, in 2013 the Department analysed information gathered from principals of government primary schools to identify best practice in the areas of:

- curriculum delivery (Personal Development, Health and Physical Education);
- school sport;
- physical activity across curriculum areas;
- school practices, including playground markings, which promote physical activity in breaks; and
- developing partnerships with parents and community.

Based on this information, the Department has commenced the documentation of case studies for videos to be placed on the Physically Active Schools Website which demonstrate a wide range of school approaches to physical activity. The selected case study videos will include rural and isolated schools, large metropolitan schools and a school for a specific purpose and will be promoted through the Physically Active Schools website and through departmental communication channels. They will provide guidance to NSW government schools in increasing quality physical activity opportunities for their students within their local school context.

Use of the *Physical Activity Continuum* by teachers will allow government school principals to better plan school physical activity programs using data gathered from student assessments. The Department will implement processes to allow schools to self-nominate best practice physical activity initiatives as demonstrated through their student's successful movement along the continuum.

Consistent with the Local Schools, Local Decisions reform agenda, the Department will continue to support schools by advising them of best practice resources and professional development opportunities through the Physically Active Schools website, which links to teaching standards, physical activity initiatives and resources.

**6. *The Department stated that it would provide targeted assistance to schools most in need to meet the mandatory physical activity requirements by February 2014. Can you provide an update on the progress of this? Specifically, what targeted grants and teacher learning programs will be made available to schools in need of support?***

The Department is currently analysing data gathered during 2013 and February 2014 to determine which schools require targeted assistance; this work is now scheduled for completion by April 2014 due to the need to gain specific data regarding sporting activities that are only scheduled at certain times of the year.

The 100 schools identified as most in need of requiring targeted assistance will be provided with additional resourcing in order to facilitate additional teacher participation in professional learning opportunities. These schools will also receive an additional \$2,000 towards either additional professional learning and/or resourcing which could include:

- sporting equipment/facility enhancement; or
- teacher professional learning opportunities within the Premier's Sporting Challenge 'Lifting your Game' and Live, Life Well @ Schools programs.

Schools will also be encouraged to work with local sporting organisations and to develop local strategies within the context of the school and its community to meet the mandatory physical requirements.

**7. *Can the Department provide an update of its policy review of all current DEC policies containing the mandatory requirements of physical activity? How will this review increase the skill levels of primary school teachers in teaching physical activity in sport education? Specifically, what do 'mandatory requirements' refer to?***

The Department's policies are currently being reviewed for consistency with the *Local Schools, Local Decisions* reform agenda in consultation with key stakeholders. This work is scheduled for completion by June 2014 and is scheduled for release as part of the Department's review of all policies by July 2014.

The two policies relating to the mandatory physical activity requirements are:

**1. *Sport and Physical Activity Safety Policy for Schools***

- Schools are required to **include two hours per week for planned physical activity**, including in Years 3-6, a minimum of one hour for sport. In each of Years 7-10, 80-120 minutes per week is allocated. 80-120 minutes per week is also

required for Year 11 students, and for students in Year 12, if Year 12 students wish to participate.

- Principals are responsible for the development and implementation of a student supervision plan for school sport and other physical activity programs. This includes mandatory procedures, requirements and responsibilities for outdoor recreation activities, including risk management processes.
2. *Policy Standards for Curriculum Planning and Programming, Assessing and Reporting to Parents K – 12.*
- Schools are to plan curriculum and develop teaching programs that are consistent with the *Education Act 1990* and NSW BOSTES syllabuses and credentialing requirements. The combined BOSTES and Department minimum requirements for government schools for physical activity and sport including that schools are to provide **two hours per week for planned physical activity** (through activity in Physical Education and Sport) and a minimum of one hour for sport in years 3, 4, 5 and 6. Teaching programs are to incorporate assessment as an integral component and use a variety of appropriate assessments for judging student achievement. The *Physical Activity Continuum* will be integral to this. Teaching programs are to indicate the outcomes being addressed, the teaching activities planned and the intended assessment strategies.
  - Schools are to provide parents/carers throughout the school year with formal and informal opportunities to receive information about and discuss their child's learning, including a written report on their child's learning at least twice per year.

Consistent with the Local Schools, Local Decisions reform agenda, principals will be responsible for allocating resources to teacher professional learning to increase the skill levels of primary school teachers and for ensuring primary school teachers have the necessary skills to teach physical activity in sport education. Complimented by additional resources through the Physically Active Schools Website, professional learning workshops and the introduction of the Physical Activity Continuum, teachers will have greater access to current teaching resources to enhance physical activity initiatives in school communities.

**8. *DEC commented against recommendation 6 that the strengthening of the Principal Assessment and Review Schedule will include a systematic monitoring process related to physical activity in schools. How is this dashboard monitored?***

The self-regulation tool, supported by new integrated business systems to support and collate relevant school based data, will allow the collection of data from different data sources and is currently under construction. The self-regulation tool is scheduled for piloting in government primary and secondary schools by May 2014 and is scheduled to be available to all schools by 2015.

The self-regulation tool is an integrated tool that incorporates system wide data from various data sources and will give principals stronger evidence for local decision making relating to student performance. This tool will allow Directors, Public Schools NSW to monitor the implementation of Department policies including Physical Activity in Schools.