

An Examination of Virginia Elementary School Principals' Scheduling Decisions Regarding
Opportunities for Students to Participate in Physical Activity During the School Day

By Andrew W. Greve

B.A. in Psychology and Philosophy, May 1997, Boston College
M.A. in Psychological Service Counseling, August 1999, Marymount University
Ed.S. in Educational Leadership and Administration, August 2003,
The George Washington University

An Abstract of Dissertation Submitted to

The Faculty of
The Graduate School of Education and Human Development
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor in Education

August 31, 2017

Dissertation directed by

Jennifer K. Clayton
Associate Professor of Education Administration

An Examination of Virginia Elementary School Principals' Scheduling Decisions Regarding Opportunities for Students to Participate in Physical Activity During the School Day

Abstract of Dissertation

The principal is ultimately responsible for decisions regarding the master schedule at the elementary level of education (Canady & Rettig, 2013; Young, 2008), and these scheduling decisions are influenced by multiple factors (Benamati, 2010; Harris, 2013; Howard & Rakoz, 2009). Although principals have become increasingly aware of the need to use data to make informed decisions (Holcomb, 2012; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; O'Neal, 2012), data pertaining to the relationship between scheduled opportunities for students to participate in physical activity and academic achievement is limited. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of principals' scheduling decisions regarding how much time is designated for daily physical activity for third grade students in Virginia and the relationship between these decisions and academic performance.

A survey of public school principals was used to collect information regarding scheduling decisions, as well as the role of accountability, wellness legislation, and other factors that may possibly influence decisions. This survey collected scheduling information regarding the opportunity for students to participate in physical activity as part of the scheduled curriculum. These data were compared to each school's academic achievement, which was measured by students' performance on Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) exams in third grade reading as reported by school leaders.

Based on the results of this study, school leaders identified multiple factors influencing their scheduling decisions pertaining to opportunities for students to participate in physical activity. These factors of influence were coded into six categories: accountability demands of the SOLs, student health, autonomy limitations, time limitations, resource limitations, and

liability risks. School leaders reported accountability demands of the SOLs as having the greatest influence on their scheduling decisions.

Based on the data reported by school leaders, there is a significant positive correlation between the daily duration of scheduled physical activity and the academic performance of the school on the Grade Three Reading SOLs. Adjusting for socioeconomic status using the percentage of students receiving free or reduced priced meals, the scheduled duration of physical activity was a better predictor than the duration of reading instruction in predicting academic performance.