

School Day Athletic Practice

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Prepared by Dr. Sherrill Martinez

Planning and Research

Executive Summary

Prior to the 1999-2000 school year, Quality Performance Accreditation Regulations did not allow a school to conduct athletic practice during the school day unless the school was granted a waiver. In the fall of 1999, the State Board of Education changed the Quality Performance Accreditation Regulations to allow elementary and middle schools (schools that include any of the grades six through nine) to conduct athletic practice during the school day at a time when one or more elective academic courses or a study period are offered to students. The Board then asked the Planning and Research Team to investigate the impact of middle schools using part of the school day for athletic practice. Since small schools are the schools most likely to benefit from school day athletic practice, school day athletic practice surveys were sent to the superintendents of the 258 smallest school districts in the state. Seventy percent (180 surveys) were returned. In addition, School Improvement and Accreditation Team files were searched to identify all schools that had been granted waivers to allow school day athletic practice for the school years beginning in 1997, 1998, and 1999. State achievement data were collected for these schools for the year prior to the waiver (all schools), the year of the waiver (schools granted waivers in 1997 and 1998), and the year after the waiver (schools granted waivers in 1997). Results of the study follow.

- Thirty-four percent of the superintendents indicated that allowing middle school athletic practice during the school day would benefit their district. The benefits listed most frequently were less of students' time spent away from home, better use of personnel and facilities, more students participating in athletics, and fewer transportation problems.
- Sixty-eight of the 180 districts allowed school day athletic practice. In 45 percent of these districts, athletic practice substituted for physical education. In another 4 percent of the districts, athletic practice was an elective. Among other methods for including athletic practice were lengthening the school day (6 percent) and taking a few minutes away from each of the other classes (13 percent).
- In 22 percent of the districts that allowed school day athletic practice, all middle school students participated in athletic practice. Students not in sports in the remaining districts were in a physical education, remedial, study hall, or elective classes during athletic practice.
- Sixty-six percent of the districts taking advantage of the new regulation conducted school day athletic practice for at least 7 months of the school year.
- Listed among the possible negative consequences of school day athletic practice (from the 68 superintendents whose districts allowed it) were loss of academic time (16 percent), teacher/coach scheduling problems (12 percent), poorer quality physical education program (12 percent), less practice time (9 percent), and no negatives or more positives than negatives (52 percent).
- When asked what else the Board should know about the issue, 40 percent of the 134 superintendents who responded to the question said they were against school day athletic practice and the rest were somewhat or totally in favor of it. The superintendents that favored school day athletic practice said that the entire issue was a resource issue (32 percent) or that it was good for students and families because it gave families more time together (21 percent).
- Kansas assessment data were analyzed for the 17 districts that were granted waivers. Waivers were, for the most part, for one year only. Also, school day athletic practice often took the place of physical education or an elective. Therefore, little change in reading and mathematics achievement scores would be expected. Mean student scores in districts that received waivers were above the state mean scores and changed little from the year before the waiver through the year after the waiver.

Survey Results

Surveys concerning middle school, school day athletic practice were sent to the superintendents of the 258 smallest school districts in the state. Seventy percent (180 surveys) were returned. The following tables show the superintendents' responses to a series of open-ended questions.

Would allowing middle school athletic practice during the school day benefit your district's middle school?

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	60	34
No	110	62
With some qualifications	5	3
Maybe	3	2
Total Number Schools	178	

If yes, please describe the potential benefits. (Respondents could give more than one benefit, so total adds to more than 100 percent.)

Response	Number	Percent
More students could participate in athletics	27	40
There could be better use of facilities	29	43
There would be fewer transportation problems	26	38
There would be fewer supervision problems	2	3
Students would spend less time away from home	30	44
There would be better use of personnel	15	22
Students would have better attitudes	4	6
The benefits would not be worth the loss in class time	3	4
Total Number Schools	68	

What was taken out of the schedule to allow time for school day athletic practice?

Response	Number	Percent
Nothing; athletics is an elective	3	4
Nothing	3	4
Nothing; the day was lengthened	4	6
Students go from PE to athletics; the total time is lengthened; students are not required to participate	6	9
There are enough periods in the day to allow students to have all courses as well as athletics	2	3
PE	30	45
Combination of classes like PE, art, music, study time	4	6
Lunch, recess and/or pass time	2	3
Study hall or homeroom	5	7
Reading or other elective class shortened	4	6

A few minutes were taken from each class	5	7
Total Number Schools	68	

What did students who were not participating in athletics do during practice time?

Response	Number	Percent
They took PE	32	47
All students participated	15	22
They were in study hall or a remedial class or an elective class	21	31
Total Number Schools	68	

For about how many months of the school year were students involved in school day athletic practice?

Response	Number	Percent
All year	28	44
7 to 8 months	14	22
5 to 6 months	5	8
Less than 5 months	17	27
Total Number Schools	64	

If there were negative consequences from allowing school day athletic practice, please describe them. (Some described more than one consequence, so total adds to more than 100 percent.)

Response	Number	Percent
Sends students negative messages	2	3
Academic time is lost	11	16
There is less athletic practice time	6	9
There can be teacher/coach scheduling problems	8	12
Poorer quality PE	8	12
None	27	40
More positives than negatives	8	12
Total Number Schools	68	

What else should the Board know about school day athletic practice?

Response	Number	Percent
This is a resource issue: facilities, transportation, personnel	43	32
It is good for students and families	28	21
Many do it	3	2
Leave schools alone	7	5
We are not for it	53	40
Total Number Schools	134	

Record Data

Department of Education records show that 17 schools were granted waivers, from 1997-1999, which allowed them to hold athletic practice during the school day. In the case of four of the schools, the waivers were allowing school-day athletic practice for a second year. For the other schools, the waivers were granting an initial request.

In order to make school day athletic practice unnecessary, schools were to develop a corrective action plan during the year their waivers were in effect. Since no school was to continue school day athletic practice for an extended length of time, one would not expect to find significant changes in achievement. Also, since practice time often took the place of physical education, according to superintendents, the impact on reading and mathematics achievement should be minimal. However, some schools shortened each class period to make time for practice; and others counted athletics as an elective. These options could impact achievement. Therefore, state reading and math scores of seventh grade general population students in schools with waivers were examined.

Reading

Five schools received waivers for the 1997-98 school year. Their mean Reading Index score on the State Reading Assessment was 70.8 in 1997, 72.7 in 1998, and 70.9 in 1999. These scores represent the year before the waiver (1997), the year of the waiver (1998), and the year after the waiver (1999). Five schools received waivers for the 1998-99 school year, so only two years of data were analyzed for them: the year before and the year of the waiver. Their mean score was 70.6 in 1998 and 66.0 in 1999. The mean score of the group of seven schools that were granted waivers for 1999-2000 school year was 65.4 in 1999. State mean scores were 64.7 in 1997, 64.5 in 1998, and 64.8 in 1999. For each year, the mean score of the schools with waivers was higher than the state mean. There was some variance in scores from one year to the next among schools that were granted waivers in 1997-98 and 1998-99, but not more than would be expected in schools with small student populations.

Math

Trend data on the State Mathematics Assessment paralleled the reading data. For the schools granted waivers in 1997-98, the mean Power score was 60.0 in 1997, 60.8 in 1998, and 61.4 in 1999. For schools with waivers for 1998-99, the mean was 53.5 in 1998, and 56.4 in 1999. Finally, the mean was 48.7 for the schools that received waivers for 1999-2000. State means in mathematics were 48.9 in 1997, 49.8 in 1998, and 51.1 in 1999. Only the 1999-2000 group had a mean lower than the state mean, and that score is for the year prior to the waiver.