

‘Many Voices Send a Loud Message’ to Ensure Physical Education Funding for GA Students

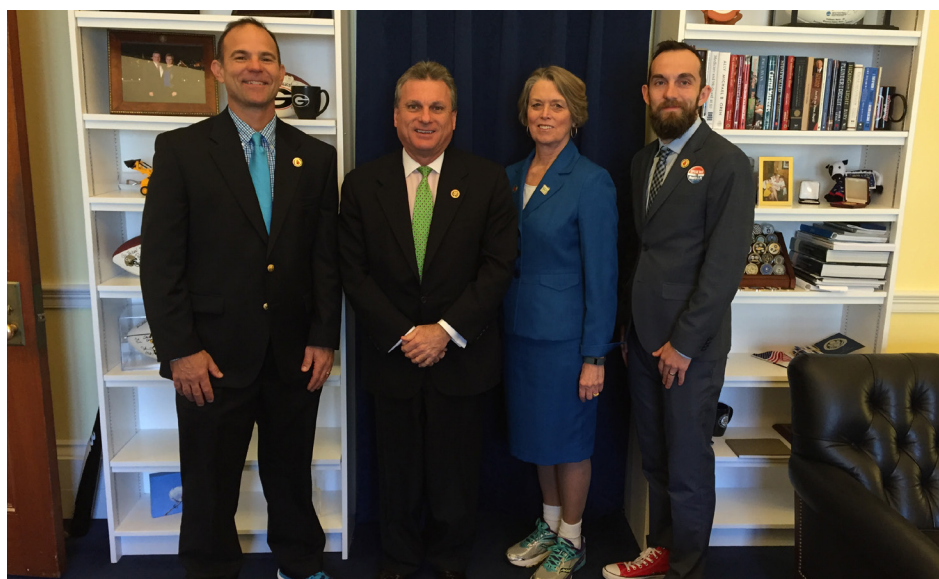
Issue: Although the 2015 *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) sanctioned health and physical education as part of a well-rounded education, the burden of prioritizing how funds are spent and what schools are held accountable for now rests in the hands of states and school districts.

ESSA’s Title IV, Part A (which funds well-rounded education, safe and healthy students, and technology) has not received anywhere close to the \$1.65B at which it was authorized under ESSA, through the appropriations process. For FY 2017, Title IV, Part A received a mere \$400M for all (italics to emphasize all) states and school districts to support these vital whole child programs. States were given discretion on how to best distribute these funds.

This means that health and PE teachers need to be strong advocates for their programs if they want to receive funding under ESSA.

“States can divvy up ESSA funding however they choose,” notes Brian Devore, past-

SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators is the nation’s largest membership organization of health and physical education professionals. The organization sets the standard for health and physical education in the U.S., and its National Standards for K-12 Physical Education serve as the foundation for well-designed physical education programs across the country. SHAPE America was also a proud member of the coalition that developed the National Health Education Standards, and is a founding partner of the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, *Let’s Move!* Active Schools (now Active Schools) and the Jump Rope For Heart/Hoops For Heart programs.



As it did in 2017, Georgia plans to have a large delegation at SHAPE America’s 2018 SPEAK Out! Day, February 13-14, to advocate for Title IV on Capitol Hill.

president of the Georgia Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (GAHPERD). With 181 school districts crafting funding priorities, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) called for a series of feedback sessions to consider how the money would be allocated. Devore realized it would take a coordinated effort to make health education and physical education an integral part of ESSA planning in the state.

The Big Idea: Inspired by recent efforts in Kentucky and Minnesota to [obtain maximum state funding and support for health and PE](#), Devore reached out to his counterparts in those states to garner potential ideas he could incorporate. He also contacted Carly Wright, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy at SHAPE America, for guidance on how to marshal GAHPERD’s 700 members to give a human face to the campaign and enlighten state education leaders on the importance of health and physical education.

“We needed multiple voices to send a loud message and to seize every opportunity we had to speak out about the importance

of robust health and PE programs in every school’s curriculum,” says Devore. He knew it was especially critical that GAHPERD members lend their vocal presence at every feedback session and share their personal stories online to the GaDOE.

Last year’s ESSA campaign mounted by the Kentucky Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (KAHPERD) had underscored the effectiveness of social media in reaching decision-makers. Devore decided to use the feedback sessions to create a social-media “blitz” to widely disperse the messages.

Implementation: GAHPERD appealed to members to attend at least one feedback session, scheduled throughout Georgia. They arrived en masse – armed with talking points and eager for the chance to tell their personal stories. “No session had fewer than six speakers,” says Devore, who kept in close contact with SHAPE America. “During one of the feedback sessions, I was texting Carly Wright in real time for assistance in answering some of the technical questions being asked,”



Working with the SHAPE America Public Policy & Advocacy office, GAHPERD keeps pressure on state decision-makers to drive home the need for funding.

he says. “I wanted to make sure we were saying the right things.”

He sent GAHPERD’s 700 members an advocacy toolkit from SHAPE America and tips on how to harness social media, and led them by example — disseminating regular pro-PE messages on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. “We found photos, infographics and quotes about the benefits of exercise on the mind and body — and the importance of health and physical education,” Devore says.

Aware of GaDOE’s strong presence on Twitter, he targeted its stakeholders directly using the DOE hashtag in tweets. Almost immediately, the GaDOE started following GAHPERD and retweeting its messages.

GAHPERD maintained a “full-court press” on state decision-makers, using every possible opportunity to drive home the need for funding. “The GaDOE has kept its website link open so it can continue to collect feedback on ESSA,” says Devore. “We created a generic template with an open-ended space

for members’ personal stories, and included it on our website and in our email blasts and newsletters,” he says. “We urged members to provide anecdotes from their own school or teaching careers as real-world examples of what was happening in the trenches.” GAHPERD also expressed its disappointment that only one member of any of the GaDOE committees had

any connection to health and PE.

Takeaway: “It takes a lot of time to stay on top of things and a lot of people pulling together from all parts of the membership to make a difference,” Devore says. “We wanted to make sure the ball didn’t get dropped. Most importantly, when you know something is coming, it’s critical to get a plan together. We were lucky to be able to learn from Kentucky and Minnesota and have so many members ready and willing to pitch in.”

Results: The campaign made a visible impact on the GaDOE’s awareness of the value of health and PE in the curriculum. “As feedback sessions were concluding in October 2016, the DOE’s Education of the Whole Child Committee asked GAHPERD to do a 10-minute presentation about what physical education and health education could contribute to educating the whole child,” Devore says. “It was a wonderful opportunity to give examples of how our content areas would enhance ESSA.”

Project Team

Brian Devore, GAHPERD Past-President

Kim Thompson, GAHPERD Executive Director

Dave Martinez, GAHPERD Advocacy Coordinator Co-Chair

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Further proof of their success came in a letter from State Education Superintendent Richard Woods to the Governor of Georgia. “Both health and PE were singled out, and they were the first two subject areas listed as eligible for Title IV, Part A grants,” Devore says.

Moving forward, GAHPERD will continue to monitor how the state’s plan is implemented and continue to forge a strong relationship with the GaDOE. They will also keep a close eye on the exact amount of Title IV, Part A funds designated by Congress. “We will activate our Legislative Action Center to engage members to contact their representatives on any Title IV votes that occur,” says Devore. Social media will continue to play a key role in their efforts. Georgia will also send a large group of delegates to participate in SHAPE America’s 2018 SPEAK Out! Day, February 13-14, to advocate for Title IV on Capitol Hill.

“We’ve had a big victory, but we have to maintain our efforts to ensure that health and PE get the funding they deserve,” he says. “We’ve now got a solid plan in place and won’t back down.”



SHAPE America’s National Standards for Physical Education

The physically literate individual:

- ✓ Demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
- ✓ Applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.
- ✓ Demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.
- ✓ Exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.
- ✓ Recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.

50 Million Strong by 2029

is SHAPE America’s commitment to put all children on the path to health and physical literacy through effective health and physical education programs. Across the country, HPE teachers and other supporters are making an impact by taking action in the following areas:

- ✓ Effective Instruction
- ✓ Healthy Behaviors & Physical Activity
- ✓ Advocacy

Want to know how you can make an impact? Learn more at shapeamerica.org/50million.

