

## CHANGE SPRINGS ETERNAL

There is a commonly known saying, especially in the area of sports that “hope springs eternal.” This is often repeated when a new sports season begins, such as the recent start to a new baseball season. In the world of education, though, I would offer to you that a revised version of this phrase would be more appropriate, specifically, “change springs eternal.”

If you follow my articles, you will recall that there was a piece of legislation that recently went into effect, known as Senate Bill 311 or the Ohio Core Bill. Under the terms of this new law, effective with the 2010-2011 school year, a student who participates in a high school sport, cheerleading, or competitive marching band can use these examples of physical activity as a substitute for the present requirement of .5 credit of physical education to meet the graduation requirement. This ruling would take effect with the Freshman Class of 2011. Not long after SB 311 was adopted, a new piece of legislation was introduced regarding physical education instruction and requirements for graduation. This new piece of legislation is known as SB 118. While it would impose some changes to the high school physical education requirement (increase the PE requirement from .5 to one full credit for graduation requirements), SB 118 is mainly focused on physical education in the elementary school setting. Many elementary students across Ohio receive the equivalent of two 40-minute class periods of PE instruction a week. Most elementary students also have one recess a day. Under the language of SB 118, this requirement for PE in the elementary would increase to everyday for all students, according to the way that I read the proposed language. The literal translation of this for

school districts is 1) less classroom time for Core subjects, music, band, or art, and more time in PE, and 2) hiring more highly qualified PE teachers to fill the need. In our district, alone, this could likely translate into a minimum of four additional elementary PE teachers. Again, this is assuming that this is what would be proposed by the legislation.

To me, this proposed law has the distinct odor of being another one of those unfunded or partially-funded mandates. I am certainly not against being fit or against scheduling more PE class time. However, there are only so many hours in the school day. Unless the State intends to increase the length of the school day or the school year, something has to come “off the plate” at the elementary level before something else can be added. This would come at a time when many districts feel increased pressure to improve student achievement test scores, plus, meet AYP with all student groups. And, EVERYBODY has an idea of how to do this. That is partially what is behind the introduction of SB 118.

We live in a day and age when it seems as though every business person, community person, and politician have a “can’t go wrong” idea on what needs to be done to improve schools. Indeed, when it comes to schools, it seems as though everyone is considered an expert, especially anyone in an occupation outside the field of education. As one who has spent 32 years as an educator, I often reflect on the metamorphosis or changes that have been made to improve public education and find it to be nearly mind-boggling. These changes have all come about in the name of improving education for all students

with the best of intentions in mind. It also occurs to me that quite often these changes come about as a means to address what are really home, family, or society problems. Educators, as a group, are hard-working, dedicated individuals. Even so, it's impossible to cure all of the ills of this state or nation in 6-7 hours a day for 180 days of the year--- plus teach the core subject matter. To be honest and fair, many changes have resulted in positive outcomes for students. However, not all would fit into that mold. While I certainly cannot speak for all educators, I could use a scorecard to keep up with some of these changes or proposed changes. Perhaps, others feel the same way, too.

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