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Attitudes and knowledge of educators about the ESSA

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Childhood obesity rates have reached epidemic levels. Today, about 17% of US children are obese. Health risks associated with childhood obesity have serious lifelong health implications. Schools seem to be a logical setting to provide movement opportunities. One piece of legislation aimed at making physical activity in schools a bigger priority is the Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA). ESSA will replace No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as national education policy beginning in 2017. ESSA is a deliberate move to put more control of decisions back into the hands of the states and local education agencies. ESSA's goal of a 'well rounded education' means more funding can be directed towards subjects such as physical education and health education. Federal dollars can now support efforts to decrease the obesity epidemic. With the change in legislation, this study examined the attitudes and knowledge of a selected group of public school educators from Illinois about their knowledge related to the ESSA and the importance of physical activity. Illinois is one of only six states that already has policies in compliance with NASPE elementary PE recommendations. Illinois also mandates daily PE for grades K-12. Adherence of individual schools to these policies appears to be lower than one might expect. Preliminary data suggest perceptions of the current PE curriculum influences support for PE. Those with positive perceptions are more likely to support PE and be well informed about legislative efforts such as the ESSA. Many decision makers call for more innovative approaches and for certified teachers.

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