

Prepared Notes for Board Meeting
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Few decisions in recent memory have generated as much emotion as the proposal to allow student athletes to be exempted from the state physical education graduation requirement. Proponents of the waiver talk about choice and academic freedom while opponents talk about the very real societal problem of the health risks associated with obesity in adolescents. There are good arguments on either side of the discussion. Indeed, it's a favorite among high school debate teams across the country.

The most vocal opponents of the waiver are from some of our physical education teachers, individuals who are justifiably proud of what they have built here. Worthington offers its students an outstanding physical education curriculum at the high school level that has brought the subject quite literally into the 21st century. To be sure, some of the constituents who have described the waiver as a "no brainer" are unaware of the content of these classes, perhaps remembering what passed for physical education in the 70's, 80's and 90's.

As I noted two weeks ago, I intend to vote in favor of the waiver, but I want to be crystal clear here. There is nothing, nothing about this vote that is a reflection on the quality of the physical education curriculum. There is no question that these classes are good for kids, there is no question that some kids enjoy the program and there is no question that the classes teach or reinforce life lessons. The issue is not whether our physical education curriculum is rich in content and modernized, the issue is whether it should be mandated by Worthington when it is no longer mandated by the State of Ohio for student athletes.

I've been a consistent proponent of the concept of designing schools that fit the kid rather than the other way around and part of that philosophy is offering students choices in what they learn and how they learn. Society has an obligation to teach children the basics in a wide variety of subjects, including health and physical education, however, the state has determined, and I agree with them, that that burden is adequately met with required health classes in K-6, again in middle school and again in high school in addition to physical education in K-6 and middle school and then, appropriately honed via two seasons of participation in a school sanctioned sport or marching band at the high school level. I want to use the rest of my time to briefly respond to the arguments I've heard from waiver opponents.

First, waiver opponents point out that a semester of "Strength and Tone" or Yoga could lead to a lifetime of physical fitness and reduced stress. I'm sure that for some students, that's exactly what happens, but I would make the same argument about any elective. Perhaps the waiver might clear room in a student's schedule for a computer science class. That one class could spark an interest that leads to a career choice. It did for me some 35

years ago. The point is that we are not telling students to not take the classes, only that they are no longer required. It's all about student/family choice.

Second, opponents of the waiver have brought up anecdotal evidence of students on our sports teams that do not fully participate but don't get cut, the implication being that PE classes should be mandated because we can never be certain that student athletes are all that physically active as a result of their participation. I'm sure this is true in many cases, but the remedy to that situation could just as easily be to challenge our coaches to pick up the ball and make sure that at least in the practices, every kid participates fully. It is unfair to those kids that do take their sport and their training seriously to penalize them because other kids may not.

Third, opponents of the waiver have talked about the possible destruction of our physical education curriculum due to lack of enrollment. To be sure, the curriculum could be downsized with reduced sections, but if it occurs, it simply means that student athletes and families found more value in alternatives than they found in the classes. Opponents also talk about a level playing field and that the deck is stacked against students voluntarily opting for a PE elective because other electives are worth more credit. This is very true, however, there is nothing stopping a student athlete from rejecting the waiver and taking their 2 PE classes and in any event, the PE requirement will continue to exist for students who do not qualify for the waiver, an advantage that other electives do not have. In any event, I don't feel it is the responsibility of the school district to create a level playing field for electives so much as to create the widest variety of choices for students.

Fourth, opponents of the waiver have compared the physical education requirement to this board's mandate for personal financial literacy. This is apples and oranges because again, we are only talking about the waiver for those students who have shown a predisposition for physical activity. I would be glad to offer an exemption for our local personal financial literacy requirement to those students who could accurately describe the difference between a stock and a bond, analyze a student loan, talk about how long it takes to pay off a \$5000 credit card bill when you pay the minimum each month and so forth. Unlike Physical Education, students receive very little of this information in K-8.

Finally, I heard the argument that if we offer the waiver, our summer school program will collapse because tuition from mandatory PE subsidizes the rest of the program. I haven't validated this with our treasurer, but I am strongly opposed to the concept of requiring student "A" to take a class and pay a fee to subsidize a class that student "B" needs. If PE is really subsidizing summer school, I hope we can take a good look at why that is and perhaps consider an alternative delivery model for summer school.

At the end of the day, it can be fairly stated that I value student choice over the intangible long term benefits of requiring 2 semesters of PE for students who have demonstrated a predisposition to physical activity, however, there is nothing in that statement that indicates that I do not value what our PE team has put together. I do. In my opinion, however, you can value something without mandating that everyone take it. As always, I

appreciate the board's indulgence allowing me to fully explain my voting rationale on a controversial issue.