

FAMILY ISSUE FACT SHEET

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SB 1564 NONPUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS; INTERSCHOLASTIC ACTIVITIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arizona students who attend nonpublic home-based schools or small private schools have limited or no school sports opportunities despite living in school districts with excellent athletic training facilities and teams. All students should have the opportunity to participate on school sports teams. SB 1564 opens the doors to public school sports for these students.

BACKGROUND

In the 1990s, the Arizona Legislature passed what is now A.R.S. § 15-802.01 to provide access to public school sports to homeschool students. At that time, homeschool students wanted to try out for athletics at the local public schools funded by their parents' taxes. Local district schools often wanted to have homeschool students try out but the interscholastic associations in the state would not allow it. Given that nonpublic schooling options have proliferated over the past two decades, an increasing number of students who learn virtually, attend pod-schools, or small private schools now lack meaningful access to interscholastic sports competition.

This access is critical to student formation. The benefits accruing to children from physical activity go beyond mere improved fitness. A longitudinal study of 5,000 children and teenagers uncovered strong connections between exercise and higher test scores in language, math, and science.ⁱ The CDC examined over fifty studies on the topic and found positive correlations between physical activity and education outcomes not only in subject matter achievement but also in attendance, concentration, memory, and mood.ⁱⁱ Researchers found 18-29 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity reduced “depressive symptoms, [and] behavior and emotional-difficulties in early adolescence.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Interscholastic sports are particularly valuable. Students who participate in interscholastic sports are significantly more likely to stay in school.^{iv} They are also more likely to show interest in classes and, for males, more likely to attend college.^v Given this evidence, it is vital that all Arizona students have access to interscholastic sports, even those children who attend schools with no or narrow athletic offerings.

WHAT THE BILL DOES

SB 1564 provides that:

- All students who reside within the attendance area of a public school be allowed to try out for interscholastic activities at the public school in the same manner as a student who is enrolled in that public school.

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- Policies regarding registration, age eligibility requirements, fees, insurance, transportation, physical condition, qualifications, responsibilities, event schedules, standards of behavior and performance policies be consistent between students from all education types.
- The person providing primary instruction of the nonpublic student verify that the student is maintaining required academic performance.
- School districts may not contract with any interscholastic associations that prohibit the participation of nonpublic school students in interscholastic activities at public, private, or charter schools.
- Defines “nonpublic school student” as a child who is homeschooled, educated pursuant to an ESA, or educated in a private school of fewer than 100 students.

TALKING POINTS

- **All Arizona children deserve access to interscholastic opportunities regardless of education background.**
- **Exercise is vital to student success.** Study after study shows that students perform better academically and thrive mentally and emotionally when they are physically active.
- **The law should guarantee equal access to state-of-the-art athletic facilities.** Arizona taxpayers fund district schools in part by property taxes. Their children all should have the opportunity to try out for teams that play at these outstanding facilities.

CONCLUSION

School sports profoundly impact student achievement. SB 1564 provides critical access to students in small home-based and private schools who cannot otherwise play school sports.

ⁱ Booth, Josie (2013) Moderate to vigorous exercise boosts teens’ academic performance. *University of Dundee*. <https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/en/clippings/moderate-to-vigorous-exercise-boosts-teens-academic-performance>

ⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010) The association between school based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance. Atlanta, GA: *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/pa-pe_paper.pdf; see, generally, Hannaford, Carla (1995). *Smart Moves: Why learning is not all in your head* (2nd ed.). Great River Books.

ⁱⁱⁱ Booth, J. N., Ness, A. R., Joinson, C., Tomporowski, P. D., Boyle, J. M. E., Leary, S. D., & Reilly, J. J. (2023). Associations between objectively measured physical activity and mental health and behavior in early adolescence. *Mental Health and Physical Activity*, 24, [100497]. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2022.100497>

^{iv} Fredricks JA, Eccles JS. Is extracurricular participation associated with beneficial outcomes? Concurrent and longitudinal relations. *Developmental Psychology* 2006;42(4):698–713; Yin Z, Moore JB. Re-examining the role of interscholastic sport participation in education. *Psychological Reports* 2004;94(3 Pt 2):1447–1454; McNeal RB, Jr. Extracurricular activities, and high school dropouts. *Sociology of Education* 1995;68(1):62–81.

^v Hawkins R, Mulkey LM. Athletic investment and academic resilience in a national sample of African American females and males in the middle grades. *Education and Urban Society* 2005;38(1):62–88.