

The Need for Physical Education and Activity in Our Schools

Kids
Can Do
it!



What Schools Can Do

Given the growing epidemic of childhood obesity and the link between physical activity and academic performance, parents and schools must work together to make quality daily physical education a priority in our schools. Our children also need more opportunities to be physically active during the school day.

- Reinststate daily PE! Provide time during every school day for a quality PE program. Strive to meet the recommended PE standards of 150 minutes per week for elementary and 225 minutes per week for secondary. These standards apply to all students all year long.
- Provide 10 to 15 minute aerobic physical activity breaks during class time every day.
- Integrate physical activity into the curriculum.
- Provide time for unstructured physical activity during recess.
- Promote active recess.
- Promote walking and biking to school.
- Listen to parents! A 2005 survey conducted by the national Action for Healthy Kids found that parents believe the following are important and should be required as a way to encourage physical activity:
 - daily PE
 - daily recess
 - a variety of other daily opportunities for kids to be active during the school day
 - after-school programs that promote healthy snacks and physical activity

Why Kids Need to Move More

Our Kids are Becoming More Overweight and are Developing “Adult” Diseases

- Researchers suggest that the childhood obesity epidemic is largely the result of a decline in regular physical activity.^{1,2}
- The Healthy People 2010 objectives call for no more than 5% of children and adolescents to be obese.³ Today, 1 in 3 children and adolescents (33.6%) is above a healthy weight. 16.5% of kids are overweight and 17.1% are obese.⁴
- Being overweight increases a child’s risk of health-related problems such as diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers. Being overweight can have a detrimental effect on a child’s academic performance, emotional health, and self-esteem.^{5,6,7}
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates a third of children born in 2000 will develop diabetes unless serious nutrition and exercise changes are made.⁸
- Prevention is key to fighting the childhood obesity epidemic – and helping kids increase physical activity is one way to put prevention into action.^{7,10}

Our Kids are Less Active

- Too many young people have fallen into a sedentary lifestyle of long hours spent in front of the TV and computer and playing video games. The average American kid watches 3 to 4 hours of TV a day.¹¹
- Despite expert recommendations that kids get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day,¹² less than 25% of kids get at least 30 minutes of any type of daily physical activity and less than 25% get 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity per day.¹³

Many of our Kids are Sedentary at School

- Opportunities for kids to be active at school have diminished considerably. Most schools have cut back on PE and recess time because of budgetary concerns and competing academic demands, such as federally mandated standardized tests under the No Child Left Behind Act.
- No federal law requires PE to be included in public schools.¹²
- While most states have some mandate for PE, most only require that PE be provided – local districts have control over content, format, and time dedicated to PE.¹²
- Even though experts recommend that all schools provide a quality daily PE program for all students, only 6% to 8% of schools nationally (depending on grade level) actually do so.¹² In Colorado, elementary students, on average, have PE only one time a week (about 30 minutes vs the recommended 150 minutes per week). Secondary students are required to take only one semester of PE in middle and high school – a far cry from the recommended 225 minutes per week all year long.¹⁴

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Why Kids Need to Move More (cont'd)

- Many elementary schools have reduced or cut out recess. Only 4% of states require recess and only 22% of states recommend that elementary schools provide students with regular recess.¹³
- Interestingly, 77% of parents support requiring daily PE that lasts at least 48 minutes for all kids, and 62% think their child's school is doing an "excellent" or "good" job in this area.¹⁵⁻¹⁷
- Kids don't walk or bike to school anymore. Most kids (about 85%) travel to school by car or bus - only 13% walk or bike to school.¹⁸
- Quality PE programs are important because they provide learning experiences that meet the developmental needs of kids, improving a child's mental alertness, academic performance, readiness to learn, and enthusiasm for learning.¹²

When Active, Kids Academic Performance Improves

- Studies show that when kids' exercise and fitness needs are met, they are more able to learn and achieve.¹⁹⁻²⁴
- A 2002 study of over 880,000 5th, 7th, and 9th graders showed an association between physical fitness and SAT-9 test results. Students with the highest fitness scores also had the highest test scores.¹⁹
- Studies show that providing more time for physical activity (by reducing class time) can lead to increased test scores, particularly in the area of mathematics.^{20,21}
- Physical activity programs have been linked to stronger academic achievement, increased concentration, and improved reading and writing test scores as well.^{21,22}
- Kids who have daily physical education classes exhibit better attendance and have a more positive attitude about school.²³
- Kids who spend less time in other subjects in order to allow for regular physical education have been shown to do equally well or better in academic classes.^{22,23,24}

The Call for More Opportunities for PE and Physical Activity

- The vast majority (95%) of parents think PE should be a part of a school curriculum for all students in grades K-12.¹⁷
- The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) calls for all schools to provide time during every school day for a quality PE program. NASPE recommends 150 minutes of PE per week for elementary and 225 minutes per week for secondary. These standards apply to all students all year long.¹²
- A majority of student leaders (72%) feel schools should make physical activity for all students a priority.²⁵

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