

Physical Activity and Learning

In the 1700's, Johann Bernhard Basedow, a great education reformer, made physical activity an integral part of his curriculum. He included games, manual work in the garden, physical training and hiking for up to **3 hours** a day in the school schedule. He was one of the first educators to understand that children at play learn more effectively.

The same is true today. Physical activity affects the brain's ability to learn by influencing cognitive processes like memory and concentration. It helps calm attention disorders, improves student focus and decision making capabilities, and relieves stress. It aids in the flow of nutrients to the brain, which can help increase a student's ability to recall information, and enhance their reasoning skills. It is directly connected to improved test scores, and may help lower student absenteeism. And, as an added bonus, students are generally more alert and energized after physical activity.

Physical activity can help boost student's confidence and self-esteem. It gives students the opportunity to develop leadership skills, learn to cooperate with others, and take responsibility for their behavior. It gives them the opportunity to practice life skills such as taking turns, following rules, resolving conflict, solving problems and communicating effectively.

Did you know?

- According to the Journal of School Health, daily participation in high school physical education classes dropped from 42 percent in 1991 to 28 percent in 2003.
- The President's Council for Physical Fitness Research Digest (June 2009), reports that only two states, Illinois and Massachusetts, require daily physical education.
- In the "Parent's views of Children's Health and Fitness Survey" results from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), they found that nearly all parents (95%) think regular, daily physical activity helps children do better academically; only 3% disagree.
- And in that same survey, the vast majority of parents of children under 18 (95%) think physical education should be part of a school curriculum for all students in grades K-12.



Why Schools?

The President's council on fitness recommends at least 60 minutes a day of physical activity for children. Schools can help students at least meet ½ of that recommendation or 30 minutes daily. And PE need not be as boring as it once was; students learn activities as diverse as kickboxing, Fitball drums (drums alive), yoga and spinning. Today's P.E. classes set the stage for lifelong learning. And physical activity is not just PE. Students can experience physical activity outside of PE through structured or unstructured recess, after-school activities or classroom activity breaks and integrated fitness in the curriculum.

For further information

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance <http://www.aahperd.org/>

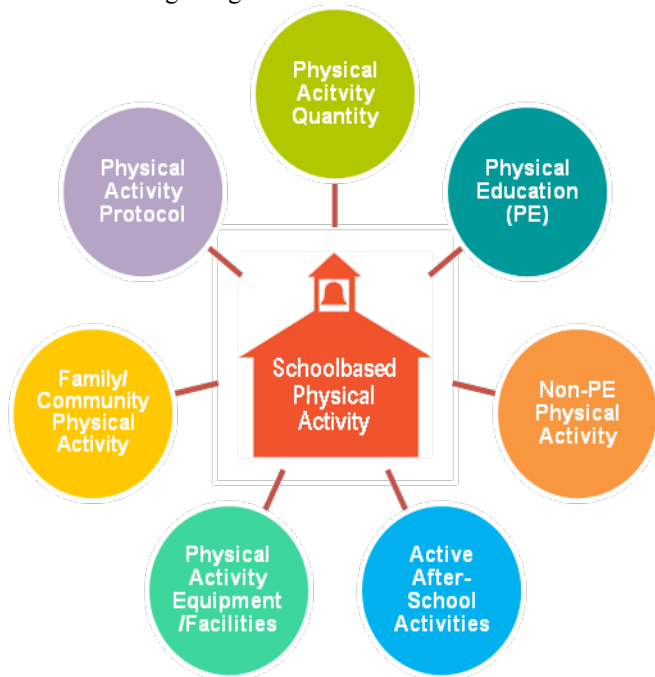
The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports <http://www.fitness.gov/>

National Center for Safe Routes to School <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>

Colorado Parks and Recreation Association <http://www.cpra-web.org/>

Comprehensive Health Services

Your school can offer a wide variety of services designed to meet the multiple and changing needs of children and their families. A comprehensive, interconnected school-wide program will make physical activity an integral part of your school's culture. A fully integrated program contains each of the following categories.



Physical Activity Quantity

The school provides physical activity for every student at every grade (K-12) level. Students receive at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day including recess, activity breaks and/or after school activities.

Physical Education (PE)

The school provides daily PE for **all** students, and they are evaluated on their participation and performance. The class is taught by a highly qualified physical educator. The class promotes lifelong fitness and teaches students the concept of **why** fitness matters. The PE curriculum offers a variety of fitness opportunities that promote the understanding of movement and use of motor skills. Students are engaged in moderate to vigorous activity at least 50% of the time. Student safety is built in through the use of active supervision, of appropriate behavior promotion and safety gear.

Non PE Physical Activity

Elementary school students have daily recess with structured and/or unstructured activities. Physical activity is built into the school's curriculum in a multitude of classes. Effective learning activity breaks are offered. The school's physical activity program provides a balance of key movement skills. A "safe routes to school" program is implemented.

Active After-School Activities

The school provides a variety of active before and after-school activities. The activities offered are a combination of athletic and non-athletic in nature. The school offers interscholastic physical activities.

Physical Activity Equipment/Facilities

The school has adequate equipment and space both inside and outside of the building. Equipment meets required safety standards. Playgrounds are up to date and have adequate gear. Facilities and/or equipment have been modified for special needs students, and these students are included in activities.

Family/Community Physical Activity

Families are made aware of the physical activities at their student. They are encouraged to participate in physical activity inside and outside of the school. Communities are invited to be part of the school's physical activity program, and their activities are promoted within the school.

Physical Activity Protocol

The school has clear guidelines on how physical activity will be managed in the school, and it follows state and federal guidelines. An annual fitness assessment is completed on students each year. Recess is not withheld as student punishment.

Jump start your health services

Start small and grow from there with some simple activities like adding 10 minute fitness breaks in the classroom, offering a walk to school Wednesday program, or adding a morning stretch as part of morning announcements.

Long term success

Each of these categories can involve a multitude of strategies to help ensure long term success. To identify the ones that most appropriately meet the needs of your school, please contact Cathy Schmelter at Get Smart Schools – cathy@getsmartschools.org.