

More Time for Physical Education and Teacher Collaboration

*Playworks at AC Whelan Elementary
Revere, MA*

Playworks is a national non-profit organization that supports learning through structured physical activity and games. The organization reaches students in hundreds of low income schools throughout 13 cities, including the greater Boston area. For \$25,000 per year, each partner school is matched with a Playworks coach, who works with teachers and students to provide services both during and after the school day. Playworks has modified these services to

AC Whelan Basic Facts	
Address	107 Newhall St Revere, MA 02151 781.388.7510
Principal	John Macero
Grades	K – 5
School Day	7:55 – 3:50
Student Performance	2009-2010 MCAS Results

During the school day:

- **Organized games and activities during recess**
- **Individual class games**
- **Leadership development program**

After the school day:

- **Tutoring**
- **Physical activity programs**
- **Developmental sports leagues**

fit the expanded day schedule at AC Whelan.

Playworks at Whelan

In 2008, AC Whelan added 105 minutes of student learning time to their day, and prioritized including more time for teacher collaboration. In order to provide collaborative time within the day, the school scheduled a daily physical education period, during which grade level teachers could meet. Prior to 2008, the school offered gym once a week for 30 minutes; with the added time, each student received a daily 40 minute gym period.

Each of Whelan's K – 5 grades included four to six sections, totaling 30 classrooms. For physical education, three classrooms were combined with other sections, creating 27 different PE classes each day. With only three physical education teachers teaching six periods each day, the school relied on its nine special education teachers to cover the remaining nine daily gym periods.

Time	Sample 5 th Grade Schedule
7:55 – 8:10	Homeroom/Spelling
8:10 – 8:50	Science
8:50 – 9:35	Specials (Art, Music, Spanish)
9:45 – 11:15	ELA
11:15 – 11:30	Snack/Bathroom
11:30 – 1:00	Math
1:10 – 1:40	Lunch
1:45 – 2:25	Social Studies
2:25 – 3:05	Gym (daily)
3:05 – 3:50	Academic Support (2x/wk) Creative Extensions (2x/wk) Curriculum Plus (1x/wk)

In 2009, Whelan partnered with Playworks to supplement the existing physical education curriculum and decrease the number of periods covered by special

education teachers. Instead of planning recess and activities, the school's Playworks coach's schedule closely resembles that of the school's physical education teachers, including:

- Six periods of gym Monday through Thursday
- One period of Curriculum Plus every Thursday, training students to be Junior Coaches
- Five periods of grade wide recess every Friday

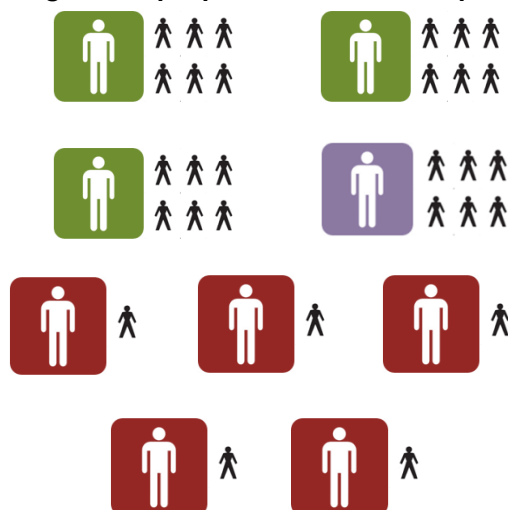
Gym Periods	Friday Recess	Curriculum Plus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learn the rules/motions, and play new game as a class ▪ Students choose to play 3-4 small group games ▪ Classes alternate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students choose among games they have learned ▪ Staffed by other 3 phys education teachers ▪ Play grade wide games that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Train assigned 5th grade students to be junior coaches ▪ Junior coaches resolve conflict and handle equipment ▪ Junior coaches debrief with





Furthermore, with three physical education teachers and the Playworks coach each teaching six periods, the school no longer had to combine three classes. Instead of 27 daily sections of physical education, Whelan now could provide 29 daily sections of physical education, leaving only five—compared to nine before Playworks—special education teachers to teach the remaining physical education periods. This change also allowed for more classroom and individual student support throughout the day.

Staffing 27 Daily Gym Periods Before Playworks



Staffing 29 Daily Gym Periods After Playworks



 = gym teacher  = special ed teacher
 = Playworks coach  = class of students

"For me," says John Macero, Whelan's principal, "bringing Playworks in was a no brainer. It's a cost effective way to free up our special education teachers while teaching kids new games, teamwork, and conflict resolution skills. Everyone sees Johnson [the Playworks' Coach] as another one of the teachers. He has a similar schedule, the same prep, and the kids really love the work he does with them.