



FOCUSWELL

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend children and adolescents spend at least 60 minutes per day engaged in physical activity in order to achieve and maintain optimal health and well-being. Beyond the obvious health benefits, physically active students are better learners. Research shows that increasing physical activity in school can positively affect students' academic performance, attendance and on-task behavior.



CPS Policy Guidance for Physical Activity

The Office of Student Health and Wellness (OSHW) recommends offering daily physical activity for all students in addition to recess (applies K-8) and physical education in the following areas:

- Physical activity inside and outside the classroom
- Before and after school activities
- Parent and community engagement
- School staff involvement

Integrating physical activity into the school day has many positive effects on students' health and their ability to learn. Below are some examples:

- Physical activity increases blood flow to the brain, which needs more oxygen than any other part of the body.
- Physical activity is a tool for differentiating instruction, engaging all learners and anchoring learning concepts. Up to 85% of school-aged children are predominantly kinesthetic learners.
- Physical activity reduces student stress and anxiety.
- Physically fit students perform better on standardized tests.
- Physical activity can reset student focus during longer learning blocks. Brain function goes down after sitting for 20 minutes.
- Physical activity that includes cross lateral movement improves brain function.
- Aerobic physical activity grows brain cells.

60 minutes of physical activity per day: Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program

In 2013, the CDC recommended that all schools should develop a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP), an approach that uses multiple components to achieve a school culture that contributes to increasing student physical activity. Let's Move Active Schools, Michelle Obama's active schools initiative, identifies five components for CSPAP: 1) physical education, 2) physical activity during school, 3) physical activity before and after school, 4) staff involvement and 5) family and community involvement.

Physical Education Class

Physical Education (PE) is the foundation of a comprehensive physical activity program. Other programs such as recess and physical activity in the classroom should **NEVER** replace PE. Please refer to [MoveWELL](#), the PE chapter of this toolkit, that outlines the major goals for a quality PE program.

Physical Activity during the School Day

Recess

Recess is not just free time; it is free time with a purpose. CPS requires 20 minutes of recess daily for elementary students and recommends that it is scheduled prior to lunch. For more information on recess, please see [PlayWELL](#), the recess chapter of this toolkit.

School-Wide Activity

The first 10-15 minutes of the day are an excellent time to engage in movement as a whole school community. Movement first thing in the morning:

- Prepares the mind and body for learning.
- Sets the tone for an active day.
- Builds physical activity habits for a lifetime.

There are many different ways to start a morning movement program at your school, including:

- The PE teacher calling out fitness routines during morning announcements.
- The PE teacher preparing fitness stations on the blacktop, in the gym or even the cafeteria.
- Teachers and/or school staff leading students through a simple exercise routine or put on a video for students to follow.

Physical Activity in the Classroom

Including physical activity in lessons, procedures and routines is an excellent strategy that will help teachers achieve many of their goals and objectives in the classroom. Physical activity can create positive classroom community, reduce student stress and anxiety, and serve as a tool to engage all learners in the curriculum.

Physical activity in the classroom will be most successful if procedures are taught prior to beginning the activity. Procedures for movement activities must be clear, structured, taught to the students and practiced over time. For example, it is important to teach the students a clear start and stop cue such as “go”, and say “freeze”.



Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program Resources

Additional Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program resources can be found through the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).



PLAN

IDEAS TO INCORPORATE MOVEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

Focus reset, or brain breaks: Reenergize students with 2-5 minutes of physical activity. Try of some of these ideas to refocus students.

Beach Ball: Students pass a balloon or beach ball between them and whenever the ball/ balloon hits the ground, students do 10 jumping jacks.

Balancing Act: Students walk around the classroom balancing a paper plate on their head.

Stand-up/Sit-down: Students are given a cue to listen for, such as an initial consonant sound or part of speech. When the teacher reads a passage, students respond to the cue by standing up. When they hear the cue again, they will sit down. Repeat as many times as the cue is said.

Thumb and pointer switch: Students extend right pointer finger and do a “thumbs up” with their left hand. When the teacher calls “switch”, students switch hands.

Integrating physical activity across the curriculum: Physical activity is a great instructional tool to get and keep student attention and to anchor learning with experience.

Count and Jump: Practice counting or multiplication tables by having students jump for each number.

Gallery Walk High and Low: Set up stations for students to work at, but put one up high and the next one low on the ground so that they move up and down throughout the class.

Corners: For lessons that include discussions, assign different topics to corners of the room and have students choose a corner that represents their opinion.

True or False: Review content by assigning a cardio movement to “true” statements, and a strength movement to “false” statements. The teacher reads a statement and the students respond with the appropriate movement.

Increasing Heart Rate: Aerobic activity primes the brain for learning. Doing moderate to vigorous physical activity before a test or other challenging learning experience can improve student performance.

Morning Jog: Students jog in place while doing activities signaled by the teacher, such as wiggling their fingers, putting their arms over their head, wiggling their wrists, etc.

Act it Out: Teacher reads sentences to the class and students act out each sentence for 30 seconds. For example, “jog in place as if a big scary bear is chasing you,” “jump in place as if you are popcorn popping,” and “shake your body as if you are a wet dog.”

Work it Out: Do each of the following for 10 reps: 1) march in place, 2) face chair, tap toes on chair, 3) feet together and hop side to side and 4) sit on chair and stand up.



RESOURCE

Help teachers include more movement into their lessons. See the flier at the end of this section and distribute it to your school staff for movement integration in the classroom.



PLAN

IDEAS TO INCORPORATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN HIGH SCHOOLS*

In-Class Physical Activity Ideas for High Schools

Teachers are encouraged to incorporate physical activity into their lesson plans. Below are ideas for activities that integrate movement.

Classroom Physical Activity Calendar

As a group, students will provide ideas for completing a monthly “Classroom Physical Activity Calendar.” Once the calendar is complete, the teacher will post the calendar in the room and/or provide each student with a copy of the calendar. Students will participate in the classroom physical activities according to what is listed on the calendar.

Variation: The number of activities, time allocated to activities, number of days per month can vary based on teacher preference.

Opposite Hunt

Divide the class in half. Half of the class writes a word on an index card. The other half writes the definition. Shuffle the cards and hand one card to each student. The students must move around the classroom and match the word with the definition. Try math problems and solutions as well.

Deep Breaths Tradition

Make it a classroom tradition to take 3 deep breaths, each held for 3 seconds, before a big test or a presentation.

Breathing Deep

Host a “break” for breathing. For 6 total breaths, have students: Breathe in slowly (4 count), hold for 4 seconds, breathe out slowly (4 count) and hold for 4 seconds

Calm Down

Lead students in stretches to help loosen up tension. Have students hold each stretch for 15-20 seconds:

- Reach for the sky
- Touch toes
- Arm circles
- Neck circles
- Knee to chest
- Quad stretch, etc

Gallery Walk

Tape large worksheets on wall with markers throughout the classroom. Students move from worksheet to worksheet and answer the different questions. You can adjust this exercise so that sheets are placed at different levels in the classroom, requiring students to stretch and/or bend.

No Stress Test

Make it a classroom tradition to have a 2-5-minute walking break before a test to help everyone unwind and relax.

Quiz Me

While reviewing for a test, ask the students a series of true-or-false questions. If the question is true students should jump in place for 15 seconds. If it is false they should touch their toes. The physical activity can change as desired (i.e. mini jumping jacks, knees to chest).

Walk and Talk

Break students into groups of 2 or 3, and assign a topic related to a current lesson plan that students need to discuss while taking a 5-minute walk. They should report their discussion back to the class.

Rock-Paper-Scissors with Feet

Have students stand up and pair up. Rock is with the feet together. Paper is with the feet spread apart. Scissors is placing the feet in a crisscrossed position. To start, jump and count: 1-2-3 go.

Play Cards

Using a deck of cards, assign an activity to each of the four suits (ex: jumping in place, running in place, sit-ups, squats). Pass out a card to each student and have them do the corresponding activity for that suit for 20 seconds. Have students pass their cards to their neighbor and repeat for 5 passes.

Add a twist: have students perform the activity the number of times designated on the card.

Shake It

Students remain seated and raise their hands in the air. Get out any jitters and have them start by shaking their:

Right hand 10 times

Left hand 10 times

Left foot 10 times

Right foot 10 times

Repeat counting down the number of shakes from 9-1. Speed up or slow down the counting to keep it interesting.

Promote an Active High School Community

It is important to involve the entire school community in physical activity including students, staff, parents and guardians. Some ideas include:

- Hold a walking and/or biking to school competition. Celebrate the winning students, homeroom class, or grade level with a dance party in the gym.
- Create a list of 60-second physical activities and make weekly PA announcements for the entire school to participate.
- Plan a 3K Walk/Run as a school fundraiser. Offer students Service Learning Hours for their help in planning the event.
- Host a Wellness Fair filled with physical activities (Zumba, Yoga, Pilates, Salsa Dance, Aerobics, etc).
- Celebrate class successes and reward positive student behavior with open gym time or a monthly dance class in the gym.
- Organize a students vs staff sports or obstacle course competition. This can also be used as a fundraiser.



TIPS FOR INCORPORATING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INTO THE SCHOOL DAY

Make it intentional. Put physical activity into classroom lesson plans. Plan a focus reset each time you transition to a new subject or activity. Aim for at least one movement activity in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Make it fun. Movement can be a great way to build community in the classroom, especially if the teacher participates with the students.

Make it routine. Just like any other classroom routines, procedures for including movement in the classroom need to be taught and practiced.

Include student choice. Students are more likely to participate if they have some involvement in choosing or leading the activities.

Track your progress and create an incentive. Use a physical activity tracker chart. Challenge a neighboring classroom to see who can do more physical activity in one week.

Use transition times for opportunities to do activity. Instead of just waiting in line, do a wall sit or balance on one foot. Jump or crab walk to the rug instead of walking.

Physical Activity Before and After School

Physical activity should continue beyond school hours. One great way to include physical activity before or after school is to encourage active transportation that is safe and supervised. The *Local School Wellness Policy* encourages schools to promote and support walking or biking to and from school.

These local and national resources can assist schools in planning and promoting safe walking and biking for students.

- Active Transportation Alliance is an OSHW Food and Fitness partner and expert for developing Safe Routes to Schools plans in local communities, activetrans.org/saferoutes.
- Safe Routes to Schools programs work to improve the health and well-being of children by enabling and encouraging them to walk and bicycle to/from school, saferoutesinfo.org.
- Walk Bike to School helps promote active transportation through national walk and bike to school days, walkbiketoschool.org.

Staff Involvement

It is essential to have staff involvement for a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program. Staff buy-in and investment can create a school culture that promotes movement throughout the school day. School staff can also be positive role models for students by participating in physical activity with students and demonstrating their own commitment to physical activity. Try including physical activity during staff meetings or professional development sessions.

Family and Community Involvement

Incorporate movement activities into family and community nights or events to support bringing physical activity from the classroom to the home.



INTEGRATING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INTO THE CLASSROOM

Cross lateral movement improves brain function

85%
of students are kinesthetic learners

Research shows that physically fit students may perform better on standardized tests

AEROBIC ACTIVITY CAN GROW BRAIN CELLS

Physical activity breaks up longer learning blocks

20 MIN
Brain function goes down after sitting for 20 minutes

The brain needs more oxygen than any other part of the body

Follow these tips for integrating physical activity in the classroom successfully.

Space

- All movement should be able to be performed in a medium to small space and be classroom appropriate.
- Every student should stay in his/her personal space during the activity (unless clearly stated otherwise).
- Modify familiar movements to accommodate a smaller space, e.g., mini jumping jacks or desk push-ups.

Transition Back to Traditional Learning

- **Movement Cues:** Develop a routine with your students that includes clear start and stop cues, such as “go” and “freeze.”
- **Transition routine:** Have a routine that signals the transition back to traditional learning. For example: the teacher calls out an action and the class responds with 3 of that action; 3 claps, 3 deep breaths, etc.
- **Anchor with a calm movement:** Before sending students back to their desks, anchor the experience with a calming movement. For example: butterfly breaths, yoga pose, tiptoe back to their desk.



RESOURCE

Physical Activity Resources

See resources provided below for assistance with incorporating physical activity into your school:

ABC Fitness provides a guide for classroom-based physical activities for grades K-5 broken-up into different subject areas and grade bands.
<http://www.davidkatzmd.com/docs/ABCManual.pdf>

Active Transportation Alliance provides resources and sample lesson plans to promote physical health and protect the environment through sustainable transportation.
activetrans.org/education/teachers

JAM School Program brings physical activity and health education into the classroom and offers free wellness resources for schools. <http://www.healthetips.com/jam-program.php> and videos are available here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKlJFT7QRg&noredirect=1>

K-5 Energizers helps teachers integrate physical activity with academic learning.
<http://eatbettermovemore.org/sa/enact/school/documents/afterschool.pa.programs.K-5-Energizers.pdf>

Math and Movement provides resources for using movement as a component of math curriculum that can help kids learn more, retain more and gain valuable basic skills while engaging in physical activity. mathandmovement.com

Math Middle-School Energizers provides ideas for classroom-based physical activity and ways teachers can integrate physical activity within academic concepts.
bit.ly/ecu-energizers

Pinterest Brain Breaks Boards include activities pinned by users.
<http://www.pinterest.com/jenbass/brain-breaks/>
<http://www.pinterest.com/krschnei/school-brain-breaks/>

Teenager Brain Breaks gives ideas for educating the teen brain using energizing brain breaks. <http://www.scoop.it/t/teaching-the-teen-brain-presentation>