

Integrating Physical Activity throughout the School Day

Active Kids Make Better Learners

Recess and physical education time has steadily decreased or been eliminated in school districts around the nation, displaced by more time focused on academics. However, research shows that exercise benefits the brain in numerous ways resulting in improved learning in children.

Understanding the relationship between physical activity, body weight and academic achievement can assist schools with the design of academic and physical activity programming. Evidence shows a positive relationship between physical activity and grade point average, rate of learning, classroom behavior, as well as cognitive, social and motor skill development (Chomitz, et al., 2009) Simply put physically active students are better learners.

Evidenced Based Strategies for Physical Activity

- Physical education with moderate to vigorous activity
- Elementary school: daily recess
- Physical activity weaved into the classroom

Integrating Physical Activity into the Classroom

Finding time to fit one more thing into your already busy schedule can be difficult. But what if you could integrate into your academic lessons with physical activity or use it to transition to another classroom activity? Here are a few ideas to help you get you started.

- Play Simon Says and make the focus on physical movement.
- Reward students with extra recess time.
- Incorporate physical activity into Themes
- Provide “brain breaks” for movement. Allow students to be creative. For example, have younger students practice spelling or vocabulary words while walking around the room.
- Have students pair up and take a walking study break.
- Incorporate one to two minutes physical activity breaks into each class. Have students take turns leading various movement activities.
- Build nutritional and physical activity into Math, Science, and FACS. Determine the amount of exercise time necessary to burn off calories associated with certain foods like a candy bar and then do the exercise required.

Additional Resources: JAMmin' Minute: A one-minute fitness routines. www.jamschoolprogram.com/

Take 10 www.take10.net Grades K-5 integrates academic learning objectives with physical activity.

GeoMotion www.geomotiongroup.com Linking academic lessons using movement based products.

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation- <http://healthiergeneration.org/schools.aspx?id=3302> Includes tips to integrate physical activity before, during, and after school as well motivating movement in the classroom.

Brain Gym www.braingym.com Classroom techniques to enhance learning through the science of movement.