

FACT SHEET

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



What Are the Challenges Around Physical Activity (PA) in Schools?

- ❖ Fewer students walk or bike to school (it has dropped from 66% in 1974 to about 13% in 2000).
- ❖ Many schools have reduced or eliminated recess and have very short lunch breaks.
- ❖ Due to the emphasis on academic achievement, there may be no breaks during the school day that allow for PA.
- ❖ Schools may have low levels of supervision, poor or no equipment, and inadequate recreation areas.
- ❖ Schools may not have organized after school PA programs and youth may not have transportation to activity locations outside of school (such as organized sports or public parks).
- ❖ Neighborhood public play areas may be unsafe and inadequate.
- ❖ There is a lack of quality Physical Education in schools (see also Physical Education fact sheet).

What is the Ideal?

- ❖ Safe routes to and from school for walking/biking.
- ❖ Adequate and safe facilities and playground equipment.
- ❖ PA breaks during the school day.
- ❖ Daily recess for elementary school students.
- ❖ PA time before eating lunch instead of after eating lunch (elementary only).
- ❖ PA opportunities before/after school that are non-competitive, inclusive of all students, and accommodate all physical ability levels.
- ❖ Professional development for teachers and parent volunteers to effectively guide PA.

Physical Activity (PA) Recommendations

It is recommended that young people (ages 6–19) engage in at least 60 minutes of PA on most, and preferably all, days of the week. PA can be defined as both structured and unstructured routines at home, school, work, transport (such as walking to school), leisure, and recreation. Fewer than 25 percent of children get at least 30 minutes of PA per day. PA decreases and levels off with age, especially among girls.

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What does your LSWP say about PA?
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What Can Parents Do?

- ❖ Find out what kinds of PA your child's school offers (before, during or after school).
- ❖ Ask for daily recess in elementary schools.
- ❖ Ask for intramural physical activities.
- ❖ Start walking/running/biking clubs or other intramural PA groups.
- ❖ Work with teachers to start pedometer programs (integrated into classroom activities or outside school hours).
- ❖ Improve school yard facilities.
- ❖ Start a walk/bike to school program.
- ❖ Talk to teachers and the school principal about the importance of PA breaks during the school day.
- ❖ Work with local agencies (Parks and Recreation, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club) to provide local PA opportunities.
- ❖ Advocate for lunch periods to be structured to allow adequate time to eat and for PA.
- ❖ Assist in setting up PA opportunities in after school programs.
- ❖ Raise money to purchase PA equipment or curriculum/materials for afterschool PA programs.

Additional Resources

Walk to School

Find resources to encourage more adults and children to walk/bike to school together.
www.cawalktoschool.com

Peaceful Playgrounds

Resources that will assist groups to organize playgrounds and field areas into appealing game areas.
www.peacefulplaygrounds.com

SPARK

Curriculum and training for physical education and after school PA programs.
www.sparkpe.org

Take 10!

Resources for a classroom-based PA program for kindergarten to fifth grade students that integrates 10 minutes of physical activity into academics.
www.take10.net

CANFit (California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program)

Resources for incorporating physical activity into afterschool programs.
www.canfit.org/programs.html

Project Fit America!

A national agency that works at the grassroots level with schools and front line educators to create new opportunities for kids to be active, fit, and healthy.
www.projectfitamerica.org