



Strategies for Classroom Physical Activity in Schools

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Introduction

Less than one-third of children and adolescents in the United States are meeting the recommendation from the [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition](#) to get 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day.¹⁻³ Schools can help students meet this national recommendation because close to 60 million children and adolescents attend school.⁴ Schools have also shown that they are capable of helping students get up to 20 to 60 minutes of physical activity during the school day.⁵⁻⁸ This finding underscores that schools are the most strategic and practical place for students to learn about and practice being physically active.

The [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child](#) model can help schools strategically identify and promote policies, practices, and programs that increase physical education and physical activity.⁹ Within the context of this model, schools can develop, implement, and evaluate a [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program](#). This program involves coordination across multiple components, including:¹⁰⁻¹²

- Physical education as the foundation.
- Physical activity during the school day (recess and classroom physical activity).
- Physical activity before and after school.
- Family and community engagement.
- Staff involvement.

This coordinated effort can help all students meet the national recommendation for physical activity and help ensure that all students gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to make regular physical activity a lifelong habit.

In addition to physical education and recess, classroom physical activity provides another opportunity during the school day to promote student physical activity, and it offers its own unique benefits.¹⁰⁻¹³ Making physical activity part of classroom time:¹⁴⁻²⁰

- Increases motivation and enjoyment of learning;
- Decreases behavioral problems; and
- Improves concentration, on-task behaviors, and test scores.

Classroom physical activity also helps students be more physically active.^{16,18,19,21} Regular physical activity improves strength and endurance; helps build healthy bones and muscles; helps control weight; improves mental health by reducing anxiety, stress, and depression; and increases self-esteem.²

This document, *Strategies for Classroom Physical Activity in Schools*, describes strategies for promoting and planning classroom physical activity. It also provides a list of practical resources to help school staff implement the strategies identified.

This document uses the term *classroom physical activity*. Other terms used to describe physical activity in the classroom or some aspect of it include, but are not limited to:

- Movement integration,
- Classroom physical activity breaks,
- Active learning,
- Active classrooms,
- Energizers, and
- Brain boosters.

No matter what term is used, the strategies in this document can help schools and school districts increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behavior in the classroom, which can help improve academic achievement.

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