



Physical Activity Before and After School

How Can You Help?

Encouraging students to be physically active before and after school helps them identify activities they enjoy and might engage in long term.¹⁻³ Physical activity before and after school also will help them achieve some of the 60 minutes of physical activity they need each day.

Physical activity before and after school could include walking and biking to school programs, physical activity clubs, intramural programs (i.e., organized sports by the school or community in which any child can participate), informal play on school grounds, physical activity in school-based before and after-care programs, and interscholastic sports (i.e., sports offered to students at school).^{2,3} These activities can improve students' health and their grades and test scores.⁴

What's Happening at School?

Knowing the answers to the following questions can help you support physical activity before and after school in your child's school. If you don't know the answers to these questions, check out the school handbook or school website, attend a school wellness meeting or Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meeting, or simply ask your child's teacher.

1. Does the school or district have policies about providing before and after-school physical activity opportunities to all students K-12? If yes, what are they?
2. Are before and after-school physical activity programs made accessible to all students?
3. What type of before and after-school physical activity programs are available?
4. How does the school support walking or biking to and from school?
5. Are there opportunities for parents to help with and participate in before and after-school physical activity programs?
6. Do the intramural physical activities provide opportunities for both girls and boys? Do they meet the needs of students at all levels of skills and physical abilities? Do they reflect student interest? And do they include lifetime physical activities, such as walking, running, hiking, swimming, tennis, dancing, and bicycling?
7. Do interscholastic sports programs provide structured, competitive opportunities for students to develop both sport-specific and behavioral skills?
8. Does the school coordinate with community-based organizations (e.g., YMCAs, community parks and recreation) to offer before and after-school physical activity programs (e.g., intramurals) that are delivered in school?
9. Is there an agreement between the school and a community organization, such as the YMCA, to use school facilities, or for the school to use other public or private facilities?
10. Is the school signed up for **Let's Move! Active Schools**, the national physical activity and physical education solution that equips school leaders and teachers with the resources and tools to implement effective before and after-school programming?





Ideas for Parents

You can be involved in your child's school by **attending** meetings, workshops, or training events offered by the school; **communicating** with school staff and other parents; **volunteering** for school events or in your child's classroom; **reinforcing** healthy messages and practices your child learns at school; **helping** make decisions about health in the school; and **being part** of community activities supported by the school. Here are some specific ideas for how you can support your child's school in providing physical activity before and after school.

- Join the school or district committee (e.g., wellness committee) that sets the policies for health and wellness, and work to include language about before and after-school activities.^{1,5}
- Volunteer to lead a walking school bus in your community, where a group of students walk to school with one or more adults.
- Help identify community resources that can expand existing school programs by providing intramural and club activities on school grounds. For example, community agencies and organizations can use school facilities for after-school physical fitness programs for students, weight management programs for overweight or obese students, and sports and recreation programs for students with disabilities or chronic health conditions.¹
- Watch your child practice or play sports.
- Be physically active as a family. For example, go on a family bike ride, play catch, or go for a hike together.
- Help schools make changes to the built environment (e.g., adding sidewalks and crosswalks).¹
- Help raise money to support other physical activity opportunities at your child's school.
- E-mail or discuss with other parents the importance of having opportunities for students to be physically active during the school day.
- Sign up to champion your school's **Let's Move! Active Schools** team. If your school doesn't have a team, encourage administrators or physical education teachers to enroll and get involved.



Check out additional resources for parents related to the school nutrition environment and services, physical education and physical activity, and managing chronic health conditions at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/P4HS.htm>.

REFERENCES

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School health guidelines to promote healthy eating and physical activity. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2011;60(RR05):1-76.
2. Institute of Medicine. *Educating the Student Body: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School.* Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2013.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *A Guide for Developing Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs.* Atlanta: US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2013.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Health and Academic Achievement.* Atlanta: US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2014.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Parent Engagement: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health.* Atlanta: US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2012.

