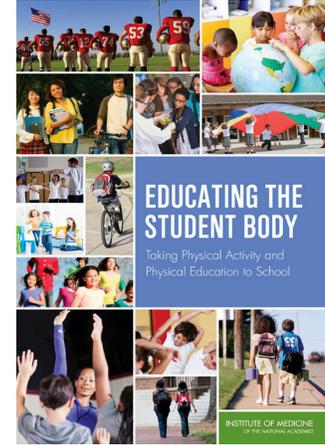


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# Educating the Student Body

## Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School

*The committee's recommendations for strengthening and improving programs and policies for physical activity and physical education in the school environment—including before, during, and after school—were based on guiding principles. The principles included recognizing the benefits of instilling lifelong physical activity habits in children; the value of using systems thinking; the recognition of current disparities in opportunities and the need to achieve equity in physical activity and physical education; the importance of considering all types of school environments; the need to consider the diversity of students as recommendations are developed; the importance of practicality of implementation and accounting for the challenges and barriers that stakeholders face; and the need to base recommendations on the best available scientific evidence and promising approaches.*



### Taking a Whole-of-School Approach

**Recommendation 1:** District and school administrators, teachers, and parents should advocate for and create a whole-of-school approach to physical activity that fosters and provides access in the school environment to at least 60 minutes per day of vigorous or moderate-intensity physical activity more than half (> 50 percent) of which should be accomplished during regular school hours.

- School districts should provide high-quality curricular physical education during which the students should spend at least half ( $\geq 50$  percent) of the class-time engaged in vigorous or moderate-intensity physical activity. All elementary school students should spend an average of 30 minutes per day and all middle and high school students an average of 45 minutes per day in physical education class. To allow for flexibility in curriculum scheduling, this recommendation is equivalent to 150 minutes per week for elementary school students and 225 minutes per week for middle and high school students.
- Students should engage in additional vigorous or moderate-intensity physical activity throughout the school day through recess, dedicated classroom physical activity time, and other opportunities.
- Additional opportunities for physical activity before and after school hours, including but not limited to active transport, before- and after-school programming, and intramural and extramural sports, should be made accessible to all students.

### Rationale

Because the vast majority of youth are in schools for many hours, because schools have important infrastructure and are critical to the education and health of children and adolescents, and because physical activity promotes health and learning, it follows that physical activity should be a priority for all schools, particularly if there is an opportunity to improve academic achievement.

### Potential Actions

For state legislatures and state departments of education, potential actions include

- Adopting and/or strengthening physical education and recess policies so they align with existing national recommendations for both total number of weekly minutes of physical education, as well as requiring students to spend at least half ( $\geq 50$  percent) of the class-time doing vigorous or moderate-intensity physical activity.
- Adopting and/or strengthening before- and after-school program policies so they align with national recommendations on physical activity standards.
- Adopting school siting policies that encourage schools to be located within residential neighborhoods.
- Working with national and state-level parent-teacher organizations to mobilize and create engagement in this effort.

For school districts and schools, potential actions include

- Continuing to strengthen policies by requiring time for physical education and recess that aligns with the national recommendations.

- Increasing the amount of time youth spend in physical activity through brief classroom breaks or incorporating physical activity directly into academic sessions.
- Offering intramural sports and physical activity clubs before or after school and helping such programs be accessible to all students.
- Adopting joint or shared use agreements allowing school facilities to be used for physical activity programs during nonschool hours.
- Identifying key champions in schools to lead efforts.
- Working with parent groups and parent-teacher associations to create a demand for physical activity and mobilize this effort.
- Specifying objectives for vigorous and moderate-intensity physical activity during all segments of the school day (e.g., physical education, recess, classroom, transportation to and from school, before- and after-school programs).
- Work with leading professional organizations across disciplines to emphasize the importance of physical activity and encourage them to embed this priority into their national recommendations or position statements.

## Designating Physical Education as a Core Subject

For municipalities, local governments, and urban planners, potential actions include

- Considering renovating schools already located in existing neighborhoods rather than building new schools away from where students live.
- Incorporating traffic calming (e.g., reduced speed limits, speed humps or tables, sidewalks with buffers, medians) and traffic control (marked crosswalks, traffic lights with pedestrian signals) strategies into community planning to ensure safe active travel routes for students.
- Adopting school policies that encourage schools to be located within residential neighborhoods.

## Considering Physical Activity in All School-Related Policy Decisions

**Recommendation 2:** Federal and state governments, school systems at all levels (state, district, and local), city governments and city planners, and parent-teacher organizations should systematically consider access to and provision of physical activity in all policy decisions related to the school environment as a contributing factor to improving academic performance, health, and development for all children.

### **Rationale**

Many examples exist of effective and promising strategies for increasing vigorous and moderate-intensity physical activity in schools. The most thorough, yet often most difficult to implement, are multi-component interventions based on a systems approach that encompass both school and community strategies.

### **Potential Actions**

For states, school districts, schools, and school wellness committees, potential actions include

- Designating individuals or committees specifically responsible for physical activity-related opportunities and programs. An emphasis on physical activity is important and new enough that these individuals should not also be responsible for worthy but already well-established health-related behaviors such as nutrition or drug abuse.

**Recommendation 3:** Because physical education is foundational for lifelong health and learning, the Department of Education (DOE) should designate physical education as a core subject.

### **Rationale**

Physical education in school is the only sure opportunity for all school-aged children to access health-enhancing physical activity and the only school subject area that provides education to ensure that students develop knowledge, skill, and motivation to engage in health-enhancing physical activity for life.

### **Potential Actions**

For the DOE and federal and state public health agencies, potential actions include

- Finding innovative application of physical education as a core subject in sample states or districts to highlight and measure outcomes.

For non-governmental organizations, potential actions include

- Developing advocacy materials and planning dissemination of these materials to key stakeholders.

## Monitoring Physical Education and Opportunities for Physical Activity in School

**Recommendation 4:** Education and public health agencies at all government levels (federal, state, and local) should develop and systematically deploy data systems to monitor policies and behaviors pertaining to physical activity and physical education in the school setting, so as to provide a foundation for policy and program planning, development, implementation, and assessment.

### **Rationale**

Aside from a few good one-time surveys of physical activity during physical education classes, remarkably little information is available on the physical activity behaviors of students during school hours or school-related activities. Even

the best public health monitoring systems do not obtain this information.

#### **Potential Actions**

For the DOE and the Department of Health and Human Services, potential actions include

- Collaborating to ensure the availability and publication of information about school physical activity—and physical education—related policies and students' physical activity behaviors.
- Facilitating collaboration among state and district departments of education and state and local health departments to obtain and publicize such information.

For federal agencies, specifically the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), potential actions include

- Continuing to improve the Youth Risk Factor Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) and National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) systems to capture more completely student school-related physical activity behaviors.
- Developing tools suitable for use by schools and school districts for monitoring students' physical activity behaviors throughout the school day.
- Providing training for state and local health departments and state and district school systems as they endeavor to improve the monitoring of school-related physical activity behaviors and student achievement.

For local school districts and schools in coordination with local health departments, state departments of education, and state departments of public health, potential actions include

- Regularly assessing student achievement of physical education standards and the physical activity behaviors of students during all segments of the school day.
- Developing systems to collect and publicize the information collected by the local schools.
- Augmenting existing monitoring systems for students' physical fitness to include school-related physical activity behaviors and student achievement.
- Utilizing current systems of collecting educational information within schools and districts to monitor the quality of physical education and the usual dose of physical activity for students during school hours, going to and from school, and at school-related functions. Involving teachers in developing the most efficient ways to collect and provide data needed for monitoring.
- Involving wellness committee members and parents in the monitoring of opportunities for students to be physically active during physical education, recess, classroom activities, traveling to and from school, and at school-related events before and after school.

## **Providing Preservice Training and Professional Development for Teachers**

**Recommendation 5:** Colleges and universities and continuing education programs should provide preservice training and ongoing professional development opportunities for K-12 classroom and physical education teachers to enable them to embrace and promote physical activity across the curriculum.

#### **Rationale**

Teaching physical education effectively and safely requires specific knowledge about physical/mental development, body composition (morphology) and functions (physiology and biomechanics), and motor skill development and acquisition.

#### **Potential Actions**

For the DOE and local school districts, potential actions include

- Identifying exemplary training programs and highlighting them as best practices.
- Establishing requirements for competencies in physical education and physical activity for preservice and continuing education for all teachers and school administrators.

## **Ensuring Equity in Access to Physical Activity and Physical Educations**

**Recommendation 6:** Federal, state, district, and local education administrators should ensure that programs and policies at all levels address existing disparities in physical activity and that all students at all schools have equal access to appropriate facilities and opportunities for physical activity and quality physical education.

#### **Rationale**

All children should engage in physical education and meet the recommendation of at least 60 minutes per day of vigorous or moderate-intensity physical activity regardless of their region, school attended, grade level, or individual characteristics.

#### **Potential Actions**

For the DOE, state departments of education, and school boards, potential actions include

- Conducting an inventory of facilities including the type, condition, safety, and availability and opportunities for physical activity across schools and districts to give insight on where improvements can be made to address disparities.



## Committee on Physical Activity and Physical Education in the School Environment

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**Harold W. Kohl, III** (Chair)  
Professor, University of Texas Health Science Center-Houston, School of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology, Human Genetics and Environmental Sciences, Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living; Department of Kinesiology and Health Education, University of Texas, Austin

**Darla M. Castelli**  
Associate Professor, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education, University of Texas, Austin

**Ang Chen**  
Professor, Department of Kinesiology, University of North Carolina, Greensboro

**Amy A. Eyler**  
Assistant Professor, George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Program of Public Health, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri

**Scott Going**  
Interim Department Head and Professor, Department of Nutritional Sciences, and Director, Center for Physical Activity and Nutrition, University of Arizona, Tucson

**Jayne D. Greenberg**  
District Director, Physical Education and Health Literacy, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida

**Charles H. Hillman**  
Professor, Departments of Kinesiology and Community Health, Psychology, and Internal Medicine; Affiliate of the Neuroscience Program, Division of Nutritional Sciences, and the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

### Study Staff

---

**Heather Del Valle Cook**  
Study Director

**Lynn Parker**  
Scholar

**Emily Ann Miller**  
Program Officer (until January 2013)

**Sarah Ziegenhorn**  
Research Assistant (from January 2013)

**Philip R. Nader**  
Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics, Department of Pediatrics, School of Medicine, University of California, San Diego

**Kenneth Powell**  
Retired Chief, Chronic Disease, Injury, and Environmental Epidemiology Section, Division of Public Health, Georgia Department of Human Resources, Atlanta

**Leah E. Robinson**  
Associate Professor, Department of Kinesiology, Auburn University, Alabama

**Emma Sanchez-Vaznaugh**  
Assistant Professor, Health Education Department, San Francisco State University, California

**Sandy Slater**  
Research Assistant Professor, Institute for Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois, Chicago

**Nicolas Stettler**  
Senior Managing Scientist, Health Sciences Center for Chemical Regulation and Food Safety, Exponent, Washington, DC

**Gail Woodward-Lopez**  
Associate Director, Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health, University of California, Berkeley

For local school districts, school wellness committees, and other relevant local entities, potential actions include

- Thoroughly reviewing existing physical activity opportunities and reducing barriers to access for all students, including, but not limited to, creation and maintenance of physical facilities and safety of their use.

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Washington, DC 20001  
TEL 202.334.2352  
FAX 202.334.1412

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