Active Bodies, Active Minds: Research Driven Policies and Strategies

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Session Objectives

• Understand the link between physical activity and learning.
• Understand role of the board
• Share findings from a California school board member survey on physical activity and physical education.
• Highlight successful strategies to improve the quantity and quality of student physical activity before, during and after the school day.
Project Support

Support for this project is provided by grant from The California Endowment.
Physical Activity Survey Objective

Identify opportunities and barriers for districts to effectively develop, implement and monitor school physical activity and physical education policies.
Survey Findings: Positive Impact of Physical Activity

- The majority of respondents indicated that physical activity has a moderate to high positive impact on issues including:
  1. Fitness levels (97%)
  2. Academic performance (94%)
  3. Lifetime physical activity behaviors (93%)
  4. Mental, emotional and social health (91%)
Survey Findings: School District Wellness Issues

- Food and nutrition: 84%
- Physical activity/physical education: 70%
- Tobacco and drug prevention: 69%
- Safety issues (injury/violence prevention): 59%
- Mental, emotional and social health: 47%
Survey Findings:
Key barriers

1. Impact on the budget (88%)
2. Limited time in a school day (77%)
3. Competing district priorities (73%)
Survey Findings:
Impacts to Physical Activity Opportunities
(2007-08 school year)

1. Increase in physical education class size (26%)
2. Reduction in the amount of time dedicated to physical education (23%)
3. Reduction in staff who oversee physical activity opportunities (22%)
4. Reduction in recreational or before/after school sports programs (20%)
5. Reduction in physical education teachers (18%)
Supporting increased student physical activity.
Why is Physical Activity Important For Schools?

• Associated with lower levels of stress and anxiety¹

• Can positively affect concentration, memory, and classroom behavior among adolescents²

• Can improve standardized test scores³

Opportunities to Maximize Physical Activity During the Day

• Physical Education (P.E.) class
• Classroom-based physical activity
• School breaks (e.g., recess and lunch)
• Other school-based activities (e.g., clubs, fundraisers or competitions)
• Before- or after-school – (Safe Routes to School, joint use projects, after school programs)
Comprehensive Physical Activity (PA) Program
Policy Development

• Policy Briefs

Physical Activity and Physical Education in California Schools
A survey of district/county office of education perceptions and practices

Maximizing Opportunities for Physical Activity through Joint Use of Facilities

Safe Routes to School
Program and policy strategies

Increased physical activity is associated with better academic performance, concentration and classroom behavior.” Research shows that school-age children who have opportunities to engage in physical activity are more likely to focus on academic subjects in the classroom. Thus, students who walk or bike to school by walking, bicycling or using public or active forms of transportation (pursuance, scooter, and non-motorized scooters) may come to school more ready to learn. Supporting active and safe transportation to and from school through local school board policy provides an opportunity to increase daily physical activity and enhance positive health and academic outcomes among youth (see CSHA’s sample board policy and administrative regulation bylaw 1442.2 – Safe Routes to School Program).

Over the past few decades, the number of students who walk and bike to and from school has been declining. A study conducted by the U.S. Department of

HOW TO GET STARTED
School districts/CCDs can begin developing safe routes to school programs by establishing a multifaceted team with parent organizations, students, school administrators, and school transportation planners, health officials, and other stakeholders. The group can consist of a community, developing program proposals and implementing those projects selected for funding.

There are two types of programs, as examples of successful programs, available to assist districts/CCDs and communities in designing and implementing Safe Routes to School programs.

The Federal Highway Administration, the federal agency that oversees the BHIT program, recommends that program implementation address the “3 E”—education, encouragement, enforcement, engineering and evaluation as outlined below. Some of these

Common examples of joint use initiatives:
1. The district/CCD partners with an agency or organization for supervised physical activity programs by either opening existing or constructing new indoor/outdoor school recreational facilities for use before, during or after school. For example, Santee Valley Union High School District in San Diego County has a partnership with a local soccer league, allowing the league to use a school field after school hours if the league maintains.
2. The district/CCD partners with an agency or organization to utilize existing or construct new community recreational facilities for use before, during or after school. For example, the New Millennium Institute of Education has an agreement with the Frazee County Boys & Girls Club for use of its gym. (To see a video on this project, visit http://www.jonathan.com/our-work/success-spotlight.htm.)
3. The district/CCD agency or organization have reciprocal use of each other’s indoor/outdoor recreational facilities for use before, during or after school. For example, the San Carlos Elementary

METHODOLOGY
In January 2009, an online survey was sent to 7,000 California school board members with e-mail addresses. The survey yielded 379 respondents for a response rate of 13 percent. The survey data includes responses from districts/CCDs of various ages and income levels in every geographical region throughout California.

KEY FINDINGS
Perspectives regarding possible impact of physical activity
School board members held a prevailing belief that physical activity specifically impacts a variety of student health and academic outcomes (see figure 1 on page 3). The majority of respondents indicated that physical activity has a positive “both—improved academic” and
Policy Development

- Fact sheets
Development

- Student Wellness: A Healthy Food and Physical Activity Policy Resource Guide
Policy Monitoring

• Monitoring for Success: Student Wellness Policy Implementation Monitoring Report Guide
Barriers

• Competing priorities
• Limited resources – funding, facilities and staffing
• Lack the ability to initiate and engage with community partners and stakeholders
Community Collaboration

• Building Healthy Communities:
  A School Leaders Guide to Collaboration and Community Engagement
Opportunities

• Raise awareness of the needs of students
• Convene community partners
• Develop and/or participate in a collaborative community-wide wellness plan
• Promote land use policies that provide pedestrian access and safety
• Arrange joint use of facilities
• Work with cities/counties to locate schools
• Model healthy eating and active living
Contact Information

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