Physical Activity during the School Day

Active Classrooms

Classroom teachers incorporate short fitness activities into their lessons while students either stand or sit in their chairs. Active Classrooms can be used as an opportunity to move or can link lesson content to the movement. The classroom layout can also be altered to add equipment that promotes physical activity while students learn, such as using stability balls instead of chairs or treadmills for “walk and talk” school assignments.

Examples:

- **Hopping**: With feet together, hop from side to side; 10 reps  
  Source: Jammin Minute (http://www.healthetips.com/jam-program.php)

- **Math Activity**: Students swing an imaginary hula hoop around their waist 15 turns  
  Links to lesson content: Cubes and cubed roots  

- **Boogie Days**: Play an age-appropriate song and let students ’bust-a-move’; teachers have students follow their moves such as the Twist or just jumping around  
  Source: Fuel Up to Play 60 (http://school.fueluptoplay60.com/tools/view.php?id=15749467)

- **Expedition Egypt**: Watching an online video students follow along to find a stolen ‘mind-controlling medallion’ and cycle through moving their legs and arms while sitting on the floor, running in place, and jumping from one foot to the other; video length: 3:15 minutes  
  Source: Adventures to Fitness (http://adventuretofitness.com)

Benefits to students:

- Invigorates students who have been sitting for long periods in a classroom by providing an “attentional reset” that refreshes their concentration and on-task behaviors.
- Helps activate the brain, improves on-task behavior during academic instruction time, and increases daily in-school physical activity levels among children.
- Reinforces students’ healthy behaviors and an enduring healthy lifestyle.
- Provides students with the opportunity to accumulate the 60+ minutes of daily physical activity they need.
Active Recess

Engaging students in physical activity during recess provides them with fun, safe, and active play. While Active Recess should not replace physical education, it is a time when students can practice or use skills learned in physical education.

Key elements of a quality recess program:
- Provides at least 20 minutes of recess every day for all students, preferably before lunch and outdoors.
- Teaches positive playground expectations.
- Creates universal participation by offering multiple activities at recess.
- Maps the playground to designate different areas of play for playground structures, large group games, and small group activities.
- Provides play equipment to increase participation and decrease congestion on play structures.
- Provides group games led and supervised by adults to actively engage students and help build social skills.
- Provides adequate staff training for overseeing active recess.
- Viewed as a necessary educational component.

Examples of designated play zones and games:
- Open fields for large group games such as kickball, soccer, and capture the flag.
- Marked pavement zone areas for games such as 4 square, hop scotch, tetherball, and basketball.
- Zones for playground structures.
- Zones for rotating games with portable equipment such as jump ropes, Frisbees, and hula hoops.

Benefits to students:
- Provides the single biggest opportunity to raise physical activity levels: 40% of students’ total daily physical activity is accumulated during recess.
- Decreases behavior problems on the playground and maintains a smoother transition into the cafeteria or classroom setting.
- Decreases injuries on the playground.
- Students return to the classroom ready to learn and on-task.
Drop-In Time

Drop-in Time provides middle and high school students with physical activity equipment and the room to take part in either individual or group activities during the school day (homeroom or study hall time) and/or during out-of-school time.

Examples:

• Locations: gym, fitness facilities, track fields, open spaces in or around school
• Equipment: weights and weight machines, basketballs, footballs, soccer balls, broomball brooms and balls/pucks, etc.

Minneapolis Public Schools

Benefits of Active Recess Before Lunch

Minneapolis Public Schools has found that there are added benefits to providing recess before lunch, which is also supported by national research:

• Students are more relaxed and focused on eating rather than the playground.
• Improved cafeteria atmosphere.
• Less supervision needed in the cafeteria due to improved student behavior.
• Increased consumption of healthier food items such as fruits, vegetables, and milk.

Resources

Active Recess Guidelines – Minnesota Department of Education (http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/Nutr/PhyActiv/index.html)


Increasing Physical Activity through Recess – Active Living Research (http://activelivingresearch.org/increasing-physical-activity-through-recess)

“OUR TEACHERS LOVE THAT STUDENTS NOW HAVE ORGANIZED PLAY TIME SO THEY CAN BURN OFF ENERGY DURING RECESS. WHEN STUDENTS RETURN TO THEIR CLASSES, TEACHERS HAVE NOTICED THEY’RE CALMER AND MORE FOCUSED ON LEARNING. ACTIVE RECESS ALSO CUTS DOWN ON NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS THAT SPILL INTO THE CLASSROOM FROM PLAYGROUND CONFLICTS.”

RYAN GIBBS, MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRINCIPAL
RESOURCES

Brain Breaks – Michigan Department of Education
(http://www.emc.cmich.edu/BrainBreaks/TOC.htm)

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction:
Energizers for Middle School
(http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Energizers/Middle.html)
Energizers for Elementary School
(http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Energizers/Elementary.html)

Kelliher Public School

ACTIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM
Kelliher teachers incorporate “Energizers” into the curriculum to get students’ blood flowing and wake up the brain connections.

“...I BELIEVE EVERY TEACHER WOULD AGREE THAT THE ADDITIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HAS LED TO BETTER BEHAVIOR, IMPROVED TRANSITIONING, AND GREATER LEARNING ON THE PART OF ALL STUDENTS.

TIM LUTZ, KELLIHER PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

Full toolkit available at
www.health.state.mn.us/movingmatters

MOVING MATTERS!

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