



Safe Routes
to School
**National
Partnership**

School Board Members and the Shared Use of School Facilities



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Shared use (also known as joint use) occurs when a school or another entity opens up its facilities for use by community members, often for recreational activities. Shared use improves health and academic performance by helping students and community members get more physical activity. Shared use also increases community goodwill towards schools, as community members directly benefit from and engage with schools.

School boards have a crucial role to play in supporting shared use in school districts. School boards work to set policy and establish goals for the district, allowing school boards to make shared use and physical activity promotion part of the basic way that the district operates. Boards often must struggle with limited resources and competing priorities, and so shared use can provide great benefits for the district, helping to maximize resources, providing more for less, and improving student academic performance.

What Is Shared Use?

In opening up school facilities for shared use, some schools make their fields or playgrounds freely available to the public during non-school hours. Other schools partner with a city or nonprofit agency, making agreements regarding the contours of shared use. These partnerships can be formal (e.g., based on a written legal document) or informal. Formal arrangements are often documented through an enforceable agreement that sets forth the terms and conditions for the shared use of the property or facility. Such formal agreements can provide a process for identifying key considerations and avoiding potential problems. Successful partnerships generally rely on the pooling of resources to expand

community access and use public space more efficiently. For example, a school may get assistance for maintenance from the parks and recreation department, in exchange for permitting the community to use the grounds.

Shared Use Helps Students Learn and Thrive

Students who are physically active learn better.² Improved academic performance for children who are physically active may result from the fact that such children generally show better learning behaviors and have improved concentration.³

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that young people aged 6–17 years participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.⁴ However, children and adolescents are not getting enough physical activity. For example, in 2011, a mere 29 percent of high school students had participated in 60 minutes per day of physical activity during the preceding week, and only 31 percent attended physical education class daily.⁵

But children spend an average of 6.5 hours per day in school, which makes schools a prime location for intervention.⁶ Leading public health authorities, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommend sharing existing school and community recreational facilities to provide more opportunities for physical activity.⁷⁻¹⁰ Shared use can help students get the physical activity they need to learn and be healthy.

“The National School Board Association encourages local school boards to recognize that health and learning are integrally linked and that schools are a critical link in community-wide efforts to promote life-long health and prevent health-risk behaviors.”

Beliefs and Policies of the National School Board Association¹

Shared Use Defined

“Shared use” or “joint use” occurs when government entities (or sometimes private nonprofit organizations) agree to open or broaden access to their property and/or facilities for community use, such as recreational activity.



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How Can School Boards Support Shared Use?

School boards play a critical role in a school district, by setting the direction of the school district, approving funding decisions, providing support for the implementation of policies, and holding staff accountable for the implementation of these policies.¹¹ At the same time, school board members, who can be either elected or appointed, engage and represent the community. School boards have the chance to make a difference for both students and the community through supporting shared use policies.

Here are some ways that school board members can get involved:

- Pass a policy supporting shared use.
- Ensure the school board's vision and mission includes a statement emphasizing the importance of the health and well being of students, school personnel, and the community.
- Direct staff to take a coordinated approach to school health and community health.
- Work with the superintendent, school personnel, families, and community partners to develop and implement shared use agreements throughout the school district.
- Establish a subcommittee on the use of school facilities and include shared use partnerships as a regular part of the agenda.
- Appoint one or more staff people to work on the shared use of facilities; consider allocating funding for shared use programming.
- Ensure that key stakeholders participate in the district wellness council or committee, and create an implementation plan for the school wellness policy.
- Be creative! Be open to the many different ways to get students and the community physically active and practicing a healthy lifestyle.

Resources

Safe Routes to School National Partnership

- » Shared Use of School and Community Facilities
- » Shared Use Clearinghouse

Joint Use.org

- » www.jointuse.org

ChangeLab Solutions: NPLAN

- » The Benefits of a Written Shared Use Agreement
- » A Look at State Rules Affecting Joint Use Agreements

Kaboom

- » Playing Smart: Maximizing the Potential of School and Community Property through Joint Use Agreements

University of California Center for Cities & Schools

- » Joint Use Schools Initiative: Partnerships and Environments for Student Success

Public Health Law Center

- » Finding Space to Play: Legal and Policy Issues Impacting Community Recreational Use of Property

References

1 Beliefs and Policies of NSBA, 2011, Article IV, Section 5.6, <http://www.nsba.org/schoolhealth#sthash.6laoAvtt.dpuf>.

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The association between school based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010. http://www.cdc.gov/healthy-outh/health_and_academics/pdf/pa-pe_paper.pdf. Accessed October 2, 2013

3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The association between school based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010. Accessed October 1, 2013.

4 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2008.

5 CDC. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2011. MMWR 2012;61(SS-4).

6 Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) <http://www.bls.gov/tus/charts/chart8.pdf>. Accessed on October 2, 2013

7 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2020: Physical Activity Objectives (PA-10). 2010. Available at: www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/objectiveslist.aspx?topicid=33. Accessed Sept.30, 2013.

9 American Academy of Pediatrics. Policy statement. Active healthy living: prevention of childhood obesity through increased physical activity. Pediatrics. 2006; 117(5): 1834–1842. <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/117/5/1834.full?sid=1683e4b9-4c9b-4045-84f1-051d3546796f> Accessed Oct.1, 2013.

10 National Physical Activity Plan. Education: Strategy 6. 2010. Available at: www.physicalactivityplan.org/education_st6.php. Accessed Sept. 30, 2013.

11 Safe Routes to School A Primer to Understanding the Role of School Boards and Principals. Available at: <http://saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Primer-to-Understanding-the-Role-of-School-Boards-and-Principals.pdf>. Accessed Oct. 1, 2013.