



# How to Establish a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program for Your District

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Schools play an important role in providing quality, comprehensive physical activity opportunities for all students. Students who participate in daily physical activity gain health and academic benefits. (See *Active Bodies, Active Minds: Physical Activity and Academic Achievement Fact Sheet*.)<sup>1</sup> In order to attain these benefits, research indicates that specific amounts of physical activity are necessary. National guidelines recommend children and adolescents participate daily in 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) (i.e., physical activities that increase the heart rate), with at least 30 minutes of MVPA during the school day.<sup>2</sup> A comprehensive school physical activity program can ensure that students achieve the recommended amounts of daily physical activity by providing opportunities for physical activity before, during and after the school day. Components can include:

- **Quality physical education (P.E.):** Physical education classes help students acquire the skills and knowledge needed to establish and sustain an active lifestyle.<sup>3</sup> Engaging students in MVPA in P.E. has the greatest potential to contribute to academic and health benefits for most students.<sup>4</sup> (See *Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity in Physical Education to Improve Health and Academic Outcomes Fact Sheet*).
- **Physical activity during the school day:** Regular physical activity breaks can improve attentiveness and concentration in the classroom, enhance cooperation and negotiation skills and help establish social norms for active lifestyles.<sup>5&6</sup> Recess, lunchtime and classroom-based physical activity, as well as school clubs, competitions and physically active fundraisers (which can be profitable for schools) promote physical activity for students. (See *Maximizing Opportunities for Physical Activity during the School Day Fact Sheet*).
- **Before and after school programs:** Before and after school programs can help contribute to total daily physical activity for youth and can include competitive sports teams, clubs, classes or training, recreational and intramural sports, and noncompetitive activities that involve physical activities (e.g. outdoor education and community service programs).<sup>7</sup> (See *After School Physical Activity Guidelines* (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/as/documents/paguidelines.pdf>)).
- **Walk and Bike to School programs:** Various programs have been designed to promote walking and biking to school among youth as a way to increase levels of daily physical activity for children. Safe Routes to School programs are designed to make it easy, safe and enjoyable for students to walk and bicycle to and from school on a daily basis.<sup>8</sup> (See *Safe Routes to School: Program and Policy Strategies Policy Brief* and CSBA's Sample Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 5142.2 - Safe Routes to School Program).
- **Joint use of recreational facilities:** Joint use is a strategy to expand physical activity opportunities for students, staff and the community by providing access to recreational facilities (e.g., gymnasiums, athletic fields, playgrounds, parks) before, during and/or after the school day. (See *Maximizing Opportunities for Physical Activity through Joint Use of Facilities Policy Brief* and CSBA's Sample Board Policy 1330.1 - Joint Use Agreements).

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

California School Boards Association | [www.csba.org](http://www.csba.org)

California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition) | [www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org](http://www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org)



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