

New study examines best practices for supporting physical activity in schools

Physical activity not only has multiple health benefits for students, but it can also improve academic performance, attention, and behavior. Schools offer a variety of opportunities during the school day for students to engage in physical activity, including physical education (PE), recess, physical activity breaks during classroom time, and other school-based activities. National guidelines are for schools to provide at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity for students during school.

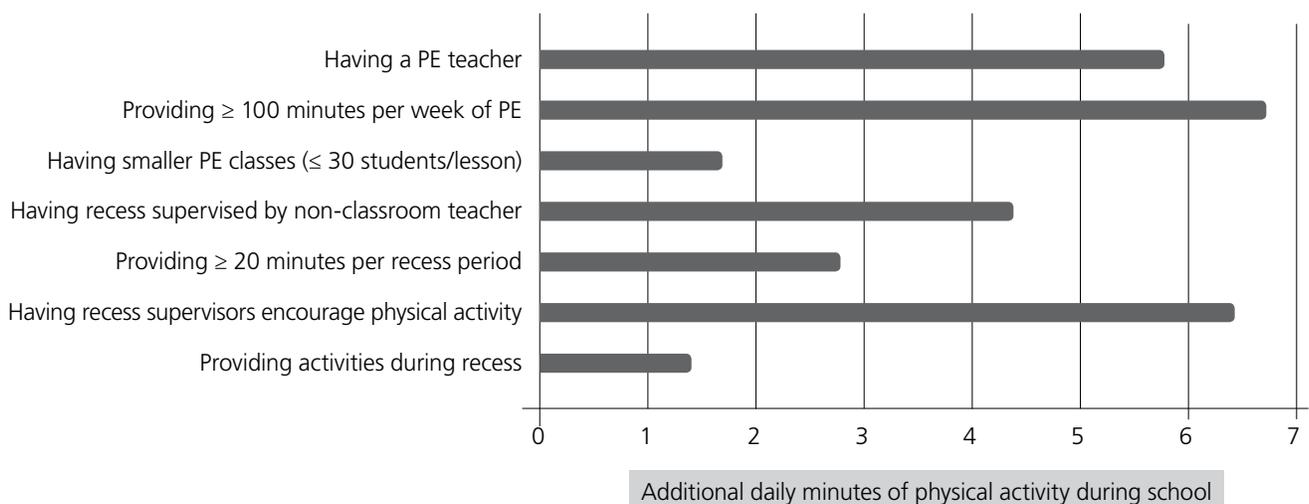
This fact sheet summarizes the findings and recommendations of a California study of the impact of various practices and policies related to physical activity during school. Researchers at the University of California, San Diego, with funding from The California Endowment, evaluated school practices and objec-

tively measured students' physical activity at 100 California elementary schools, the majority of which are in Southern California.

Findings

- » Only 45 percent of schools in the sample had students meeting the guideline of 30 minutes per day of physical activity during school, and 15 percent of students had fewer than 15 minutes per day. Figure 1 shows how each school practice was related to students' physical activity. For example, students at schools with a PE teacher accumulated almost six more minutes of daily physical activity during school.
- » Students at schools implementing multiple practices had 20 more minutes per day of physical activity

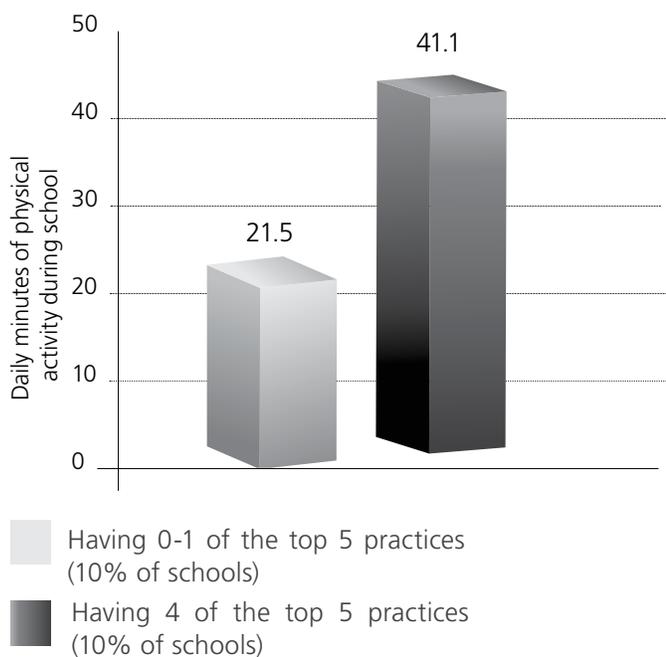
Figure 1. Various school practices can impact students' physical activity



(twice as much) than students at schools implementing only one practice (see Figure 2).

- » Schools with higher socioeconomic status (SES) families were significantly more likely to have a PE teacher than lower-SES schools (90.7 percent vs. 59.3 percent).
- » Students had almost five more minutes per day of physical activity during school at higher-SES schools as compared to lower-SES schools (32.2 minutes per day vs. 27.3 minutes).

Figure 2. Schools need to implement multiple physical activity practices



Conclusions

- » Meeting the national health guideline of 30 minutes per day for students' physical activity during school requires schools to provide multiple opportunities for physical activity throughout the day.
- » PE teachers are important to students' physical activity, and students in many lower-SES schools are particularly disadvantaged by not having PE teachers.
- » PE teachers do not always have enough time to provide an entire elementary school with the mandated 100 minutes per week of PE, and classroom teachers have difficulty adhering to PE schedules when there is no PE teacher.

Recommendations

- » Implement multiple strategies for supporting students' physical activity.
- » Prioritize funding to support students' physical activity, particularly by providing a dedicated PE teacher.
- » Provide appropriate training and accountability to classroom teachers to hold PE lessons when there is no PE teacher, or to supplement PE lessons when there is a PE teacher.
- » Assign someone (e.g., staff or volunteer) to supervise recess and specifically train him/her to support and encourage physical activity in a safe environment.

For further information

Carlson, J.A., Sallis, J.F., & The California Endowment. (2013) Best School Practices for Supporting Children's Physical Activity: Research Report. Available at www.calendow.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/By_Topic/Disparities/Obesity_and_Diabetes/ASAP14.pdf

CSBA resources related to physical activity (available at www.csba.org) include:

- » Sample board policy and administrative regulation BP/AR 6142.7—Physical Education and Activity <http://bit.ly/19vMIVz>
- » *Student Wellness: A Healthy Food and Physical Activity Policy Resource Guide*, 2012 <http://bit.ly/1cYhrtO>
- » *Monitoring for Success: A Guide for Assessing and Strengthening Student Wellness Policies*, 2012 <http://bit.ly/16HW50f>
- » *Active Bodies, Active Minds—Physical Activity and Academic Achievement*, Fact Sheet, 2010 <http://bit.ly/13DoaVY>
- » *Maximizing Opportunities for Physical Activity Through Joint Use of Facilities*, Policy Brief, 2010 <http://bit.ly/1d38r5F>
- » *Maximizing Opportunities for Physical Activity During the School Day*, Fact Sheet, 2009 <http://bit.ly/16thurv>
- » *Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity in Physical Education to Improve Health and Academic Outcomes*, Fact Sheet, 2009 <http://bit.ly/1d38GO5>
- » *Safe Routes to School: Program and Policy Strategies*, Policy Brief, 2009 <http://bit.ly/1aoK1m5>