

Guidance for Physical Activity in Vermont Schools

Integrating physical activity into multiple facets of school life provides youth with both short- and long-term benefits for health and learning. Findings from a multi-study analysis suggest that “1) there is substantial evidence that physical activity can help improve academic achievement, including grades and standardized test scores; 2) physical activity can have an impact on cognitive skills and attitudes and academic behavior (including enhanced concentration, attention, and improved classroom behavior)”¹. To this end, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that all youth participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day². However, according to Vermont’s 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) only 29% of middle school students and 25% of high school students met this target.

The Vermont State Board of Education supports this approach to whole child education and development of physical literacy by including the following statement in the *Education Quality Standards*, or rule 2000:

“Each school shall offer options for students in grades K-12 to participate in at least 30 minutes of physical activity within or outside of the school day. Physical activity may include recess and movement built into the curriculum, but does not replace physical education classes.”³

The intent of this provision is to ensure that all students have equal access to 30 minutes of physical activity per day through the school system. These 30 minutes of physical activity, ideally at a moderate to vigorous level of intensity, may be dispersed throughout the school day. Note also, physical activity should not be used as either reward or punishment. Options may include any of the following strategies:

- Active transport to or from school
- Before school physical activities
- Group physical activity during teacher advisory meetings
- Classroom-based physical activity breaks
- Recess
- Open-gym
- Hallway walking/fitness circuits
- Non-competitive physical activity sessions or clubs
- Intramural sports or interscholastic competitive sports

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: A Guide for Schools](#). Accessed 2/5/14.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Physical Activity Guidelines for Children](#). Accessed 2/4/14.

³ Vermont State Board of Education, [Education Quality Standards](#), page 8. Draft 12/17/13.

Below are free, web-based resources to readily integrate physical activity into a school day:

1. Vermont Healthy Schools Resource: Physical Activity, click [here](#).
2. Vermont Safe Routes to Schools, click [here](#).
3. Just-A-Minute (JAM) School Program, click [here](#).
4. Fuel Up to Play 60: In-School Activity Break Ideas, click [here](#).
5. Activity Bursts in the Classroom for Fitness, click [here](#).
6. Teacher Toolbox for Physical Activity Breaks in the Secondary Classroom, click [here](#).
7. Secondary Classroom Physical Activity Breaks, click [here](#).
8. Indoor Fitness Trail Stations, click [here](#).
9. Mighty Milers, click [here](#).
10. Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program: A Guide for Schools, click [here](#).
11. Let's Move, Active Schools, click [here](#).