



Creating Healthy Schools

10.2 Physical Activity is not a Punishment

What is the current policy?

Our school district recognizes the importance of physical activity for students. Teachers and other school staff will not use physical activity (e.g., running laps, pushups) or withhold opportunities for physical activity (e.g., recess, physical education) as punishment. Other disciplinary and classroom management alternatives will be used.

Ideas!

How can our school get more involved?

There are several ways you can implement and enforce this policy. Below are a few examples:

Create environments that support appropriate behaviors in schools.

- Be consistent in enforcing appropriate behaviors in the school.
- Offer positive feedback when a student does something well.
- Offer non-food rewards when a student behaves well.
- Give clear, simple direction and set classroom rules.
- Prepare for situations that may be difficult ahead of time.
- Be calm, but be stern.
- Start fresh each day.
- Make sure you are fair with your punishment toward each student.
- Make lesson plans long enough to avoid free time, or plan self-directed, alternative activities for students who experience free time in your classroom.

(more on back)

Why is this important?

Under 2010 federal guidelines, each school is required to create and implement School Wellness Policies. One policy our school established requires that physical activity not be used as a punishment and physical activity opportunities (e.g., recess) not be withheld. Staff play an essential role in effectively implementing this policy.

Withholding or using physical activity as punishment is inappropriate and is an unsound educational practice. Time spent using physical activity as punishment is time that could be spent in a more constructive manner by instructing students, developing fitness levels or providing other positive learning experiences.

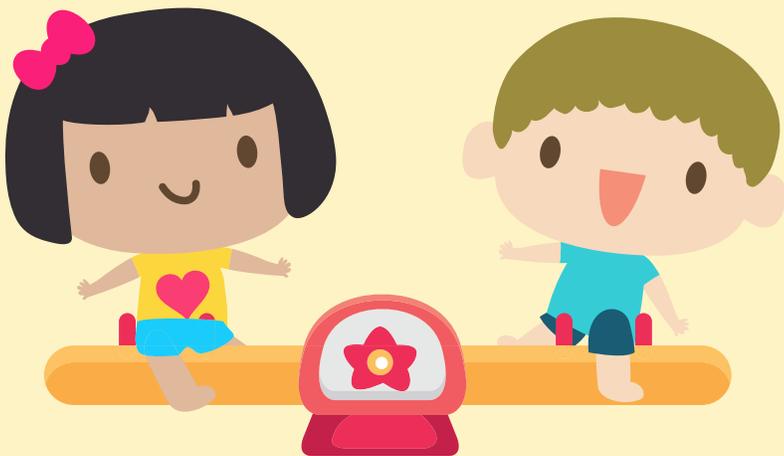
The current guidelines for physical activity state that children and adolescents need at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day. Including physical activity during the school day can help children meet this recommendation. Taking away physical activity as a form of punishment is counterproductive to promoting student academic success, health and well-being. Research shows students who have adequate physical activity improve academic achievement and classroom behavior, as well as memory and concentration. In addition, physical activity helps build strong muscle and bones and helps decrease risk of chronic diseases.

When teaching students about developing healthy lifestyle behaviors, it is equally important to promote physical activity in a positive way and avoid using it in a negative way. Engaging students in positive physical activity will improve their outlook on physical activity, while improving their movement, motor skills and overall fitness. If students are inactive as youth, they are likely to be inactive as adults. Recommendations for creating environments that support appropriate behaviors and disciplinary actions that do not use physical activity as a punishment are on the panel on the left and the next page.

Resources:

- The National Education Association put together a handout describing how to maintain classroom discipline and can be located here: http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf_classdisckansasnea.pdf
- A toolkit for positive discipline in the classroom created by Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environments, provides an outline for teachers. More information can be found at: <http://unesco.org.pk/education/icfe/resources/res10.pdf>
- The Center for Science in the Public Interest created a handout over alternatives to withholding recess as punishment in the classroom. The handout can be found here: http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/Alternatives_to_Withholding_Recess.pdf
- The National Association of Sport and Physical Education position paper on Physical Activity Used as Punishment and/or Behavior Management. This can be accessed: <https://www.shapeamerica.org/uploads/pdfs/positionstatements/Using-Physical-Activity-as-Punishment-2009.pdf>

Two other versions of this policy item are available for both administration and family to assist with implementation.



Ideas!

- Wait for students to be attentive before providing directions.
- Set classroom rules and make them easy to understand.
- Get to know your students. Include them in meaningful discussions about goals and how to reach those goals.
- Avoid using sarcasm.
- Avoid arguing with students.
- Avoid negative language.
- Make punishment age appropriate.
- Don't reinforce negative behavior by drawing attention to it.

Alternatives to Physical Activity as a Punishment

- Temporarily remove the student from the situation.
- Speak with the student one-on-one, preferably with equal eye-level contact.
- Use referrals if necessary.
- Contact the students' parents.

Physical Activity

- Provide your students with the opportunity to participate in physical activity throughout the day in a fun way!
- Do not use physical activity as a punishment tool.
- Talk positively about exercise and physical activity.