

9.1 PROVIDE REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BREAKS FOR STUDENTS

ADMINISTRATOR

Creating Healthy Schools



Implementation for success

- Classroom health education will complement physical education by reinforcing the knowledge and self-management skills needed to maintain a physically active lifestyle and to reduce time spent on sedentary activities, such as watching television;
- Opportunities for physical activity will be incorporated into other subject lessons;
- Classroom teachers will provide short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes as appropriate;
- Administration will assist teachers in understanding the rationale of this policy;
- Administration will assist teachers in adapting lesson plans to incorporate physical activity breaks during classroom time.

Model Policy:

Our school district cares about the health and well-being of students and understands the importance of physical activity. For students to receive the nationally recommended amount of daily activity (i.e., at least 60 minutes per day) and for students to fully embrace physical activity as a personal behavior, students need opportunities for physical activity beyond physical education class. As such, school staff must incorporate regular physical activity breaks for students during classroom time.

Teachers shall provide brief movement and/or physical activity breaks at appropriate times in the school day. Students shall not be required to engage in more than two hours of sedentary instruction without an opportunity to move and stretch. Teachers and school staff should support learning through movement by integrating physical activity in lessons, such as math, reading, and science when appropriate. Activity breaks should be used to complement, not substitute for, physical education classes or recess.

When activities, such as mandatory school-wide testing, make it necessary for students to remain indoors for long periods of time, teachers will give students periodic breaks during which they are encouraged to stand and be moderately active.

Evaluation:

In order to meet the requirements of the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010, the district wellness council and school administrators will be jointly accountable for implementing, enforcing, and evaluating this policy. Evaluation will consist of reviewing the classroom policies regarding physical activity breaks, and surveying faculty and staff on how they are incorporating this into their curriculum. Each school will report annually to the district wellness council on the progress of policy implementation and will include recommendations where further district support may be beneficial. The district wellness council may also request that select schools conduct student, family, and/or staff surveys as part of their evaluation process. At the end of each school year, the district wellness council leader will submit an annual report to the superintendent/board of education on the implementation and evaluation of this policy. This report shall be posted on the Internet for easy public access.

Potential benefits of providing regular physical activity breaks for students during classroom time:

- Increase physical activity levels in students
- Improve on-task behavior, attention, and concentration
- Improve academic performance
- Decrease classroom misbehavior
- Improve some measures of health²

Rationale:

Today about 1 in 3 children is overweight or obese and studies show that overweight children are likely to become overweight and obese adults.¹ If obesity among children continues at this rate, our current generation could become the first in American history to live shorter and sicker lives than their parents. Children are not meeting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day, which can directly impact their health status, growth and development, and academic performance. During the school day, teachers, principals, and school staff teach and prepare our next generation to live productive lives. Health matters. Taking steps to model healthy habits can directly affect our students in positive, measurable ways.

Regular physical activity, even in moderate amounts, has a significant impact on the health of students. Since students spend numerous hours in school, there is a great opportunity to provide more chances for physical activity. Faculty can help provide some of the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity a day through having short movement and/or physical activity breaks in the classroom.

Students have been found to work less efficiently when involved in extended bouts of instructional time with no breaks. Two hours or more of inactivity are extremely discouraged. Having periodic 3 – 5 minute breaks will help improve student academic performance and reduce boredom and misbehavior.

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

Resources:

- The National Association of State Boards of Education has a school health policy guide, Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn, with resources for physical activity breaks. This can be accessed: <https://doh.sd.gov/prevention/assets/NASBE.pdf>
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation research brief on the efficacy of short physical activity breaks in classrooms can be found: https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2013/rwjf409779
- Fuel up to Play 60 has tips and resources for implementing in class physical activity breaks. These can be accessed here: <http://school.fueluptoplay60.com/playbook/play.php?id=15812259>
- The connection between physical activity and academic performance is further explained by the CDC's report. This can be found here: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/pa-pe_paper.pdf
- Kids Health provides an updated article regarding the benefits of and ideas for exercise breaks for elementary students. This can be accessed here: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/elementary-exercises.html>

¹ CDC Childhood Obesity Facts: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/facts.htm>

² Active Living Research http://activelivingresearch.org/files/ALR_Brief_ActivityBreaks_Feb2013.pdf