



INCREASING
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Part of a series on Growing Healthy Readers:
Taking Action to Support the Health
Determinants of Early School Success



Growing Healthy Readers

TAKING ACTION TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH DETERMINANTS OF EARLY SCHOOL SUCCESS

INTRODUCTION

When children are healthy and developing on track, they are more likely to be successful in school. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading recognizes the important interconnections of health and learning, known as *the health determinants of early school success*.

Children from low-income families have more frequent challenges that affect their health and well-being than more affluent children. The Campaign's Healthy Readers Team has identified five Children's Health and Learning Priorities: health-related issues with a demonstrated relationship to one or more of the Campaign's community solutions. They include prenatal care and infant development; comprehensive screenings, follow-up and early intervention; oral health; asthma management; and nutrition and physical activity. The team has developed materials to help community stakeholders incorporate strategies that can strengthen positive impact on children's health and learning. *Growing Healthy Readers: Taking Action to Support the Health Determinants of Early School Success* is a set of seven guides to assist Sponsoring Coalitions in incorporating the Children's Health and Learning Priorities into Community Solutions Action Plans (CSAPs) to achieve the Campaign's community solutions and improve grade-level reading.

These Healthy Readers Resource Guides will help community- and state-level Sponsoring Coalitions

identify priority issues that affect children's health and determine how to take action. The priority issues and corresponding guides — each with a research-based connection to success in learning — include:

Prenatal Care and Infant Development

Resource Guide: Supporting Healthy Births and Infancy

Comprehensive Screenings, Follow-Up and Early Intervention

Resource Guide: Ensuring Early and Appropriate Screenings and Intervention

Resource Guide: Supporting Children's Healthy Social-Emotional Development

Oral Health

Resource Guide: Ensuring Oral Health

Asthma Management

Resource Guide: Controlling Environments and Managing Asthma

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Resource Guide: Promoting Healthy Food Choices

Resource Guide: Increasing Physical Activity

Sponsoring Coalitions will want to consult available local data and gather information to help determine which priorities to address to improve children's health and learning. The Resource Guides include valuable resources and recommendations about how to proceed. Each guide is organized to:

- Address the important link between health and learning
- Identify evidence-based and promising models and strategies
- Help coalitions understand how to begin to take action
- Identify content and funding resources specific to that topic

Improving health and learning for children from low-income families is important work, but it need not be daunting. No matter which strategies a Sponsoring

Coalition undertakes, it is useful to include representatives from Head Start, physician offices, the Health Department and a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) if there is one in your community. These individuals can help Sponsoring Coalition members understand the context for children's health in the community and reach out to others who can support the work.

The Campaign's Healthy Readers Team and state and regional Campaign leads can provide support as well. In the coming months, we expect to establish state-level pilot projects to link communities that are working in the same focus area, support peer learning, and provide additional information and support.

If you have questions or comments, please contact Becky Miles-Polka, Healthy Readers Team Leader: bmilespolka@gradelevelreading.net.

Reading Success by the End of Third Grade



INCREASING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

<p>Children’s Health and Learning Priority</p> <p>Nutrition and Physical Activity</p>	<p>Which community solution(s) does it support?</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">SCHOOL READINESS</div> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">SCHOOL ATTENDANCE</div> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">SUMMER LEARNING</div> </div>
<p>DEVELOPING AWARENESS</p>	
<p>What is physical activity?</p>	<p>Physical activity is any movement of the body that uses energy, including aerobic activity that increases children’s heart and breathing rates; muscle-strengthening activity, such as gymnastics and push-ups; and bone-strengthening activity, such as jumping rope and running.</p> <p>National guidelines for recommended levels of physical activity for children ages 6–17 include at least 60 minutes of a combination of aerobic, muscle-strengthening, and bone-strengthening physical activity per day. For preschool-age children, experts recommend 90–120 minutes or more of active play time every day, both indoor and outdoor. Toddlers should be allowed at least 60 to 90 minutes per day.</p>
<p>Why is it important for communities to implement this solution?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in physical activity supports key aspects of brain functioning that are critical to learning. (Ratey, 2008; Rosewater, 2009) • For young children (from birth through age 5), physical activity enhances motor skills, social skills and brain development, all critical components of school readiness. (Nemours, 2012) • Children learn through play, developing cognitive skills as they interact with their indoor and outdoor environments and social-emotional skills through play with peers. (National Research Council, 2012) • For school-age children, physical activity and improved academic performance are strongly connected. Children who perform better on physical fitness tests are more likely to earn higher reading and math scores. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2011) • Children who participate in organized sports report higher achievement in school. (Rosewater, 2009)

DEVELOPING AWARENESS (CONT.)

Why is it important for communities to implement this solution? (cont.)

- Providing time for physical activity does not decrease students' standardized test scores, and may result in enhanced cognitive function, better attendance, fewer disciplinary problems and improved student behavior. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2011)
- Many children get little physical activity at school. Although recess offers the greatest opportunity for children to be physically active, schools in urban areas and schools with high rates of children from low-income families or minority enrollment offer the least time for recess. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2011)
- Summer may be an especially risky time for lack of physical activity, especially for children in low-income communities. Changes in physical fitness that result from a school-based intervention are frequently lost during a three-month summer break. (Carrel, et al., 2007)

How can communities support children's physical activity?

- Expand opportunities to increase physical activity for children by providing after-school programs, renovating parks and enhancing opportunities for walking and bicycling to school.
- Develop joint use agreements between schools and other organizations (including local government and youth-serving organizations) to allow for community use of school facilities, including indoor and outdoor play areas, beyond school hours.
- Encourage opportunities that bring families together for physical activity, such as walking, skating or going to the park or playground. Organize playgroups for young children and their parents or caregivers in parks or other accessible spaces.
- Make sports equipment available to children in low-income neighborhoods. Sponsor a drive to collect used sports equipment and donate it to groups that serve children, such as YMCAs or Boys & Girls Clubs. Sponsor (or join) a bike-sharing program in your community.
- Recruit and train volunteer coaches to enable children to participate in team sports.
- Incorporate physical activity into summer programs. Provide adults to lead "walking school buses" to enable children to walk to summer programs. Community groups can organize before- and after-program physical activities for participating children. Parks and Recreation staff can lead games and activities at summer food program sites.

DEVELOPING AWARENESS (CONT.)

What are some strategies for increasing children's physical activity?

Strategies with Results

Playworks provides low-income elementary schools with trained coaches to help children play safely and learn interpersonal skills during school recess. Although recess provides only part of the recommended time for physical activity, using Playworks' approach can encourage children to be active and schools to incorporate physical activity for children.

Results

- Children took less time to transition from recess to learning activities
- Children had better behavior and attention in class after sports, games and play

Promising Strategies

Let's Move! Child Care (LMCC) was launched by First Lady Michelle Obama and public and private partners in 2011 and is a nationwide call-to-action to empower early education and child care providers to create healthy environments in their programs to benefit the children (ages 0–5) and families served. LMCC goals focus on physical activity, screen time, food, beverages and infant feeding. The initiative website, www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org, hosted and maintained by Nemours, provides quizzes and action planning tools, resources, materials and information to support child care providers' continued success.

Let's Move! Outside helps families and community groups organize events outdoors. The website, www.letsmove.gov/get-active, includes a link to community events, parks and playgrounds.

Strategies to Build Public Awareness

May is **National Physical Fitness and Sports Month** sponsored by the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition. The month is an opportunity for families, schools and youth leaders to raise awareness about the importance of being active.

MOVING TO ACTION

How would a Sponsoring Coalition begin to implement this strategy?

Determine what actions the team could take now to strengthen children's health and development to support improved grade-level reading outcomes. Often simple no-cost or low-cost actions are a way to build momentum and gain early enthusiasm and support for the work.

1. **Gather information** about the levels of physical activity in your community.
 - Do you see young children playing outside?
 - Are child care programs making use of parks and other outdoor venues?
 - Can children walk or bicycle to school?
 - Do parents and other adults use parks for physical activity and organized sports with their children?
2. **Understand** whether the places where children and families spend time (including parks, playgrounds and recreation centers) are safe and accessible for physical activity.
 - Are school playgrounds open to the community after school and on weekends?
 - Is the playground equipment safe and inviting?
 - Are basketball courts maintained and safe for play?
 - Do child care centers and preschool programs have space and equipment for active outdoor play?
3. **Contact** your local school (or the school district) to understand how much physical activity the school provides.
 - How often do children have recess or physical education classes?
 - Are the school facilities and grounds open to the community after school hours?

Contact your city or county government to learn what opportunities there are for expanding facilities for physical activity, and for encouraging activity in existing spaces such as parks.
4. **Engage** parents in conversations about physical activity and its importance to learning.
 - What opportunities for physical activity would they like for themselves?
 - What would they like to see available for their children?
5. **Learn** about effective programs in other communities. Visit playgrounds, parks and other public spaces. Ask your local Y about the most effective models for family physical activity.
6. **Determine** what financing strategies are available in your community.

MOVING TO ACTION (CONT.)

What funding sources may be available to support this strategy in your community?

Funding to support and enhance physical activity in most communities will come from local funding streams. Check on how your community is using:

- Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and whether any of these can be used for this purpose.
- Community Benefit funds, which may be available from local hospitals and can be used to increase children's physical activity.

Some health insurance providers may be willing to fund physical activity programs as part of an investment in prevention and health promotion.

Other federal funding sources may include:

- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant opportunities: www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/childhoodobesityafri.cfm
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state-level grant opportunities: www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/

Many local funders, including United Ways, are committed to reducing childhood obesity, and will provide resources to increase physical activity to achieve this goal. By increasing opportunities for physical activity, communities can support young children's learning while helping to reduce obesity.

Major league sports franchises support increased physical activity. For example, Major League Baseball (MLB) has entered into a partnership with Boys & Girls Clubs of America to improve health and fitness while learning the fundamentals of baseball. The NFL's PLAY 60 Challenge, co-sponsored by the American Heart Association, works to get kids physically active for 60 minutes every day.

RESOURCES

- For information about Physical Fitness and Sports Month, see President’s Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition at fitness.gov
- *Let’s Move!* Child Care (LMCC): www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org
- Nemours, Best Practices for Physical Activity: A Guide to Help Children Grow Up Healthy: www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/wwwv2/filebox/service/healthy-living/growuphealthy/pa_guide2013.pdf
- KidsHealth (from Nemours) Nutrition & Fitness Center: http://kidshealth.org/parent/centers/fitness_nutrition_center.html
- Healthy Habits for Life Resource Kit (developed by Sesame Workshop, Nemours and KidsHealth): <http://kidshealth.org/classroom/index.jsp?Grade=cc&Section=hhfl>
- National Research Council, Preventing Childhood Obesity, 2nd edition: <http://nrckids.org/default/assets/File/PreventingChildhoodObesity2nd.pdf>
- Let’s Move! Outside: www.letsmove.gov/get-active
- For Model Joint Use Agreement Resources, see www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/model-JUAs-national
- Playworks’ comprehensive website is www.playworks.org; information about Playworks is also available at www.rwjf.org/en/grants/grantees/playworks. For evaluation results, see <http://rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/evaluations/2013/rwjf406043>
- CDC Recommended Guidelines for physical activity: www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone
- Institute of Medicine, 2012. *Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention: Solving the Weight of the Nation*: http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=13275
- The National Afterschool Association has developed standards and guidelines for nutrition and physical activity in after-school programs: <http://naaweb.org/images/HEPAStandards8-4-11final.pdf>
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation resources on Physical Activity and academic performance: <http://rwjf.org/en/search-results.html?u=&k=physical+activity+academic+performance>
- Ratey, John. (2008). *SPARK: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*. Little, Brown and Company.
- Rosewater, Ann. (2009). *Learning to Play, Playing to Learn: Organized Sports and Educational Outcomes*. www.californiaafterschool.org/articles/edu.pdf
- Carrel, et al. (2007). *School-Based Fitness Changes Are Lost During the Summer Vacation*. www.minimanuscript.com/mini/readmms/17548760.
- PLAY 60 Challenge: www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Educator/FortheClassroom/NFLPlay60Challenge/NFL-PLAY-60-Challenge-Page_UCM_304278_Article.jsp.
- Boys and Girls Clubs of America/MLB partnership: www.bgca.org/meetourpartners/pages/mlb.aspx.

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