
Communicating Research to School Decision-makers to Strengthen Physical Activity Policies



Active Living Research Conference
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California Department of Public Health
February 11, 2010

Strengthening Physical Activity and Physical Education in Schools

Project Objectives

- Identify and address **barriers** and **opportunities** for school districts to improve **physical education and physical activity**
- Support school districts to improve physical activity through **policy resources and trainings**

School Board Role and Responsibilities

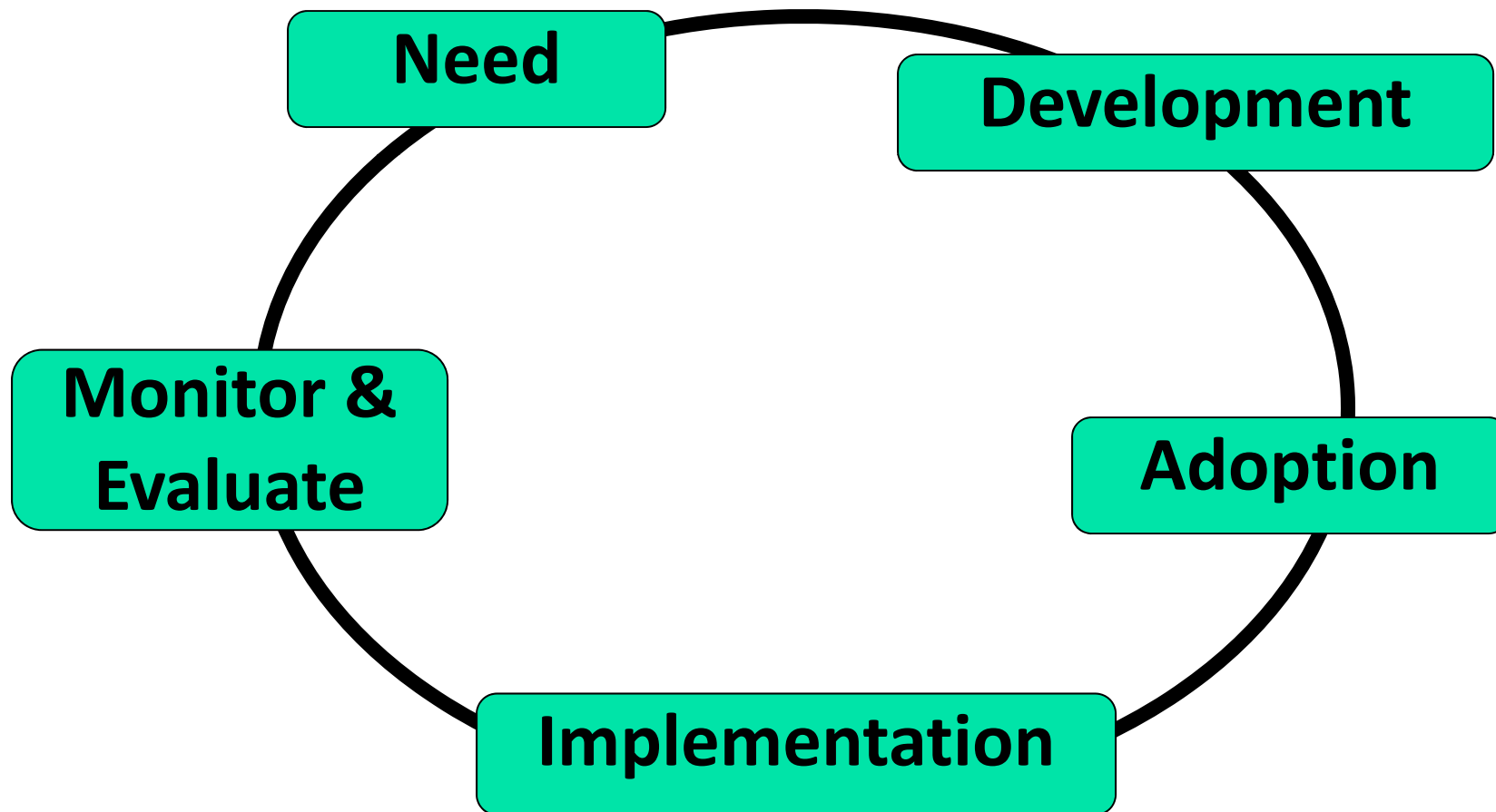
Ensure school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs, and priorities of their communities.

- Set Direction
- Establish the Structure
- Provide Support
- Ensure Accountability
- Engage and Lead the Community



Photo by Tim Wagner for HEAC

Policy Cycle





Project activities

- Formative research
- Statewide advisory group
- Pre- and post-surveys of school board members
- Development of sample board policies and administrative regulations
- Dissemination of communication pieces
- Trainings



Formative Research

Funded by and prepared for:

Physical Education Matters

Funded by and prepared for:




Failing Fitness:

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

POLICY BRIEF January 2007

...serving children poorly
 ...research on effective
 ...prove PE. There are many
 ...r improving PE, but
 ...policy changes at the state,
 ...col levels. We hope this
 ...pful to educators, health
 ...wmakers, parents and other
 ...to improve PE for the
 ...en's health and education.

Active Living Research

Building Evidence to Prevent Childhood Obesity and Support Active Communities

RESEARCH BRIEF | Summer 2009

activelivingresearch.org

Active Education

Physical Education, Physical Activity and Academic Performance

In schools across the United States, physical education has been substantially reduced—and in some cases completely eliminated—in response to budget concerns and pressures to improve academic test scores. Yet the available evidence shows that children who are

CALIFORNIA KIDS® POLICY BRIEF January 2007

For Healthy Children

...physical activity and growth is contributing to increasing rates of obesity.⁴

Reversing this troubling trend means addressing this energy surplus in the places where kids spend most of their waking moments—schools. There is an urgent need to implement effective policies and practices to increase physical education (PE) and physical activity among all students in order to prevent excess weight gain and improve mood,

Statewide Advisory Committee

- School Boards
- School Administrators
- Teachers Association
- Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
- Commission on Teacher Credentialing
- Universities
- Research
- Evaluation
- Department of Public Health
- Department of Education
- Public Health Advocacy
- Legislative task force
- Safe Routes to School
- National obesity prevention organizations

Survey Methodology

- January 2009
- Target audience: 2,669 CSBA school board members
- 339 responses (13% response rate)
- Representation from all CSBA regions



Physical Activity and Physical Education in California Schools

A survey of district/county office of education perceptions and practices

Research Brief | September 2009

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Research shows that students who participate in daily physical activity exhibit a more positive attitude towards school, better attendance and increased academic performance.¹ However, children are less physically active than ever before.² Nearly 40 percent of California children are not physically fit,³ and the prevalence of obesity among school-age children has more than doubled for children aged 6–11 years (from 7 percent to 17 percent) and more than tripled for children aged 12–19 years (from 5 percent to 18 percent) in the past 30 years.⁴

Schools play an important role in influencing student physical activity behaviors and promoting cognitive learning related to lifelong participation in physical activity. They are also in a unique position to provide a safe environment for physical activity opportunities before, during, and after the school day. Schools with numerous physical activity opportunities and quality physical education programs may see an increase in student concentration, a reduction in disruptive behaviors and improved academic performance.⁵ Further, quality physical activity and P.E. programs can contribute to the prevention of obesity and chronic disease.⁶ School boards should consider adopting, supporting and monitoring comprehensive policies and programs that strengthen opportunities for students to be physically active, healthier and more ready to learn.

This research brief summarizes key results from a confidential online survey given to California school board members on “Physical Activity and Physical Education in California Schools” developed by the California School Boards Association (CSBA) and California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition) (CPL). Based on the survey results, this brief highlights actions school districts/county offices of

education (COEs) can take to support physical activity and P.E. The survey objectives were to determine existing physical activity and P.E. district/COE policies and practices, the opportunities and barriers to improving physical activity and P.E. and the perceptions of school board members regarding the impact of student physical activity.

For the purposes of the survey, physical activity is defined as bodily movement of any type. Opportunities for physical activity before, during and after the school day include:

- P.E. class
- Classroom-based movement (activity breaks and incorporating physical activity into academic lessons)
- Recess or free play
- Walking, bicycling or other active transportation to and from school
- Recreational sport and play

METHODOLOGY

In January 2009, an online survey was sent to 2,669 California school board members with e-mail addresses. The survey yielded 339 responses for a response rate of 13 percent. The survey data included responses from districts/COEs of various sizes and income levels in every geographic region throughout California.

KEY FINDINGS

Perceptions regarding positive impact of physical activity

School board members held a prevailing belief that physical activity positively impacts a variety of student health and academic outcomes (see Figure 1 on page 2). The majority of respondents indicated that physical activity has a positive “high impact” and

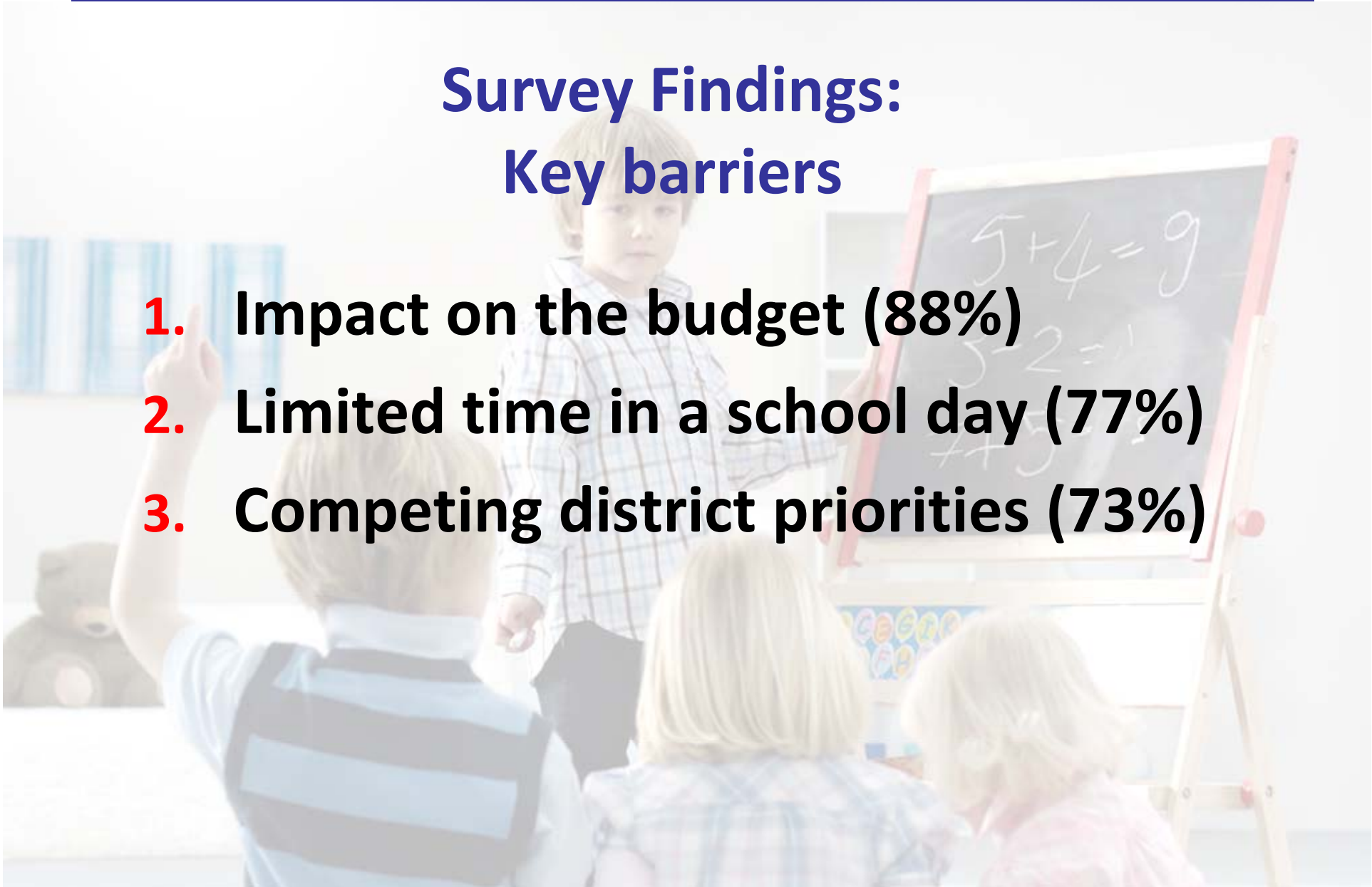



Survey Findings:

- Respondents indicated that physical activity has a positive impact on:
 1. Fitness levels (97%)
 2. Academic performance (94%)
 3. Lifetime physical activity behaviors (93%)
 4. Mental, emotional and social health (91%)

Survey Findings: Key barriers

- 1. Impact on the budget (88%)**
- 2. Limited time in a school day (77%)**
- 3. Competing district priorities (73%)**

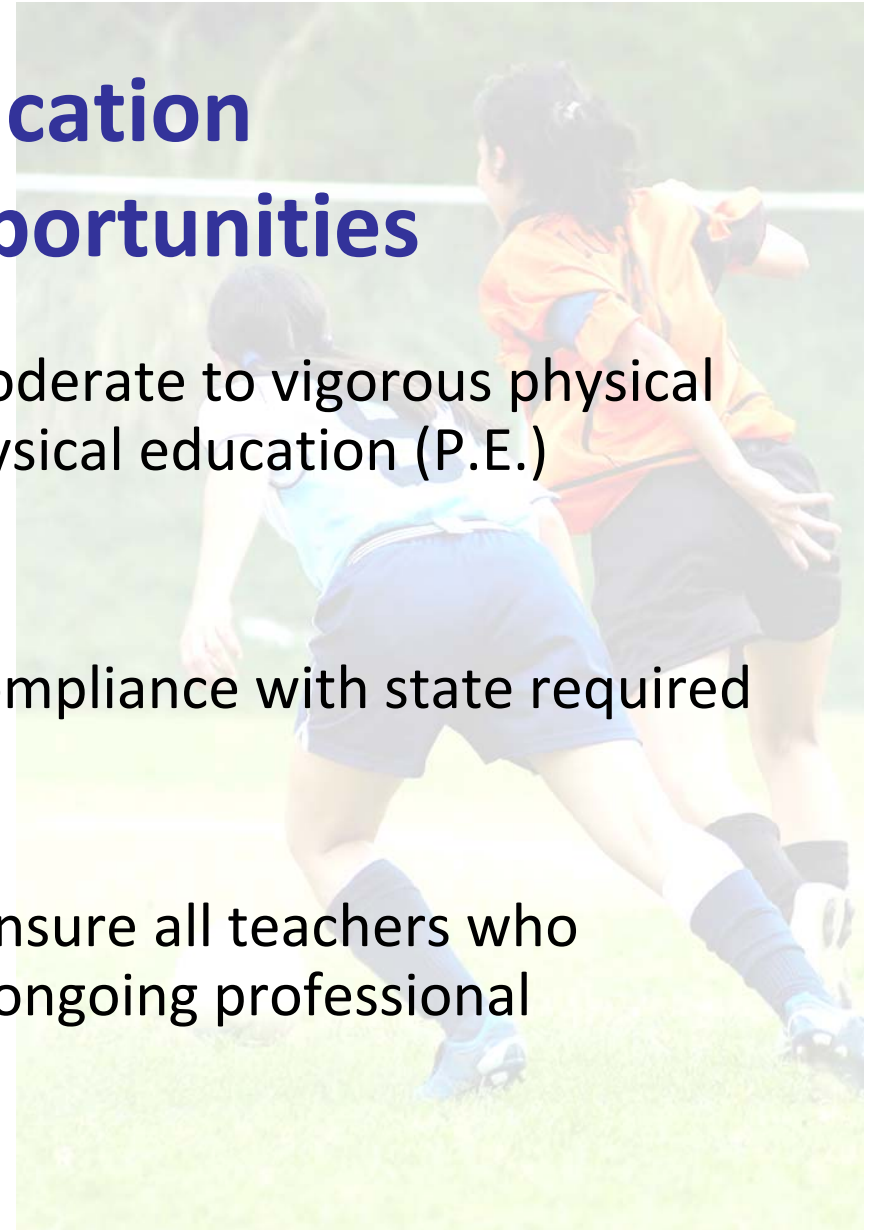


Survey Findings: Key stakeholders

1. Superintendents (78%)
2. Principals (75%)
3. Physical education teachers (67%)
4. Classroom teachers (62%)

Physical Education Board Policy Opportunities

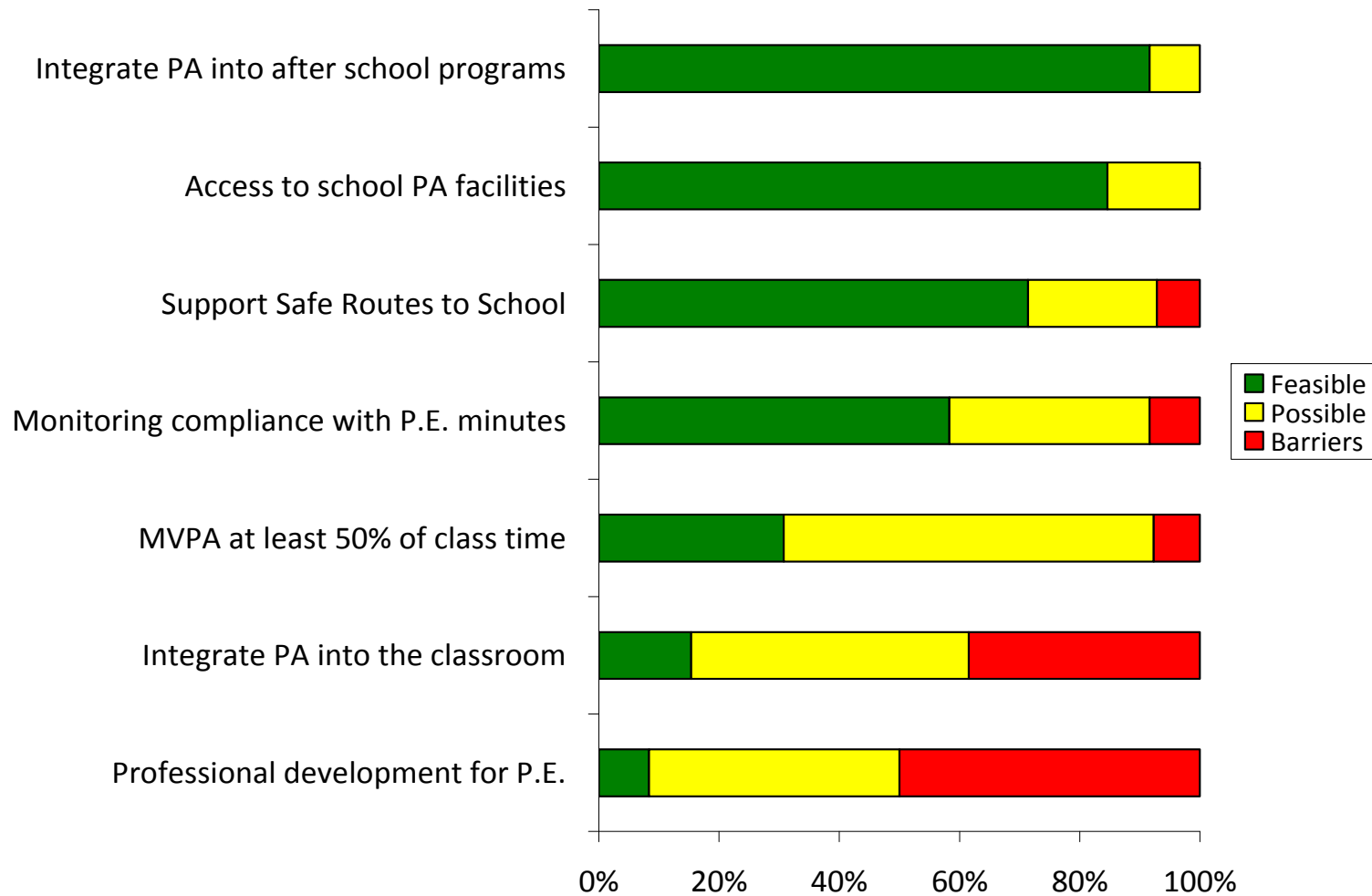
- **MVPA:** Engage students in moderate to vigorous physical activity for at least 50% of physical education (P.E.) instructional time
- **Monitor Minutes:** Monitor compliance with state required P.E. minutes
- **Professional Development:** Ensure all teachers who instruct P.E. receive focused, ongoing professional development



Physical Activity Board Policy Opportunities

- **Integrate physical activity into the classroom:** Establish physical activity breaks, structure the class to facilitate physical activity, incorporate physical activity into the curriculum
- **Safe Routes to School:** Support safe walking, bicycling and other physically active modes of transportation to/from school
- **Access to physical activity facilities:** Provide access outside school hours (joint use agreements)
- **Before/After school programming:** Incorporate physical activity opportunities

School Health Advisory Committee Policy Priorities



Communicating Research: Informing district policy



1. BP/AR 5142.2 Safe Routes to School Program
2. BP 1330.1 Joint Use Agreements
3. BP/AR 6142.7 Physical Education and Activity

www.csba.org/PhysicalActivity.aspx

Communicating research: Policy briefs



Maximizing Opportunities for Physical Activity through Joint Use of Facilities

Policy Brief | September 2009

Recent studies have emerged linking physical activity with improved academic performance, classroom behavior and school attendance among children and youth.¹ Yet, some communities lack safe and accessible places for children to play and some schools lack adequate facilities and resources for physical activity and physical education programs.² A

Common examples of joint use include:

- 1) The district/COE opens existing school outdoor recreational facilities for unsupervised public use during non-school hours. For example, Clovis Unified School District in Fresno County has a policy to make school facilities available to the community when such use does not conflict with educational or school co-curricular activities. (To see the policy, visit http://www.clovis-schools.org/news/K-1650_facility_usage.pdf.)
- 2) The district/COE partners with an agency or organization for supervised physical activity programs by either opening up existing or constructing new indoor/outdoor school recreational facilities for use before, during or after school. For example, Sweetwater Union High School District in San Diego County has a partnership with a local soccer league, allowing the soccer league to use a school field after school hours if the league maintains it.
- 3) The district/COE partners with an agency or organization to utilize existing or construct new community recreational facilities for use before, during or after school. For example, the New Millennium Institute of Education has an agreement with the Fresno County Boys & Girls Club for use of its gym. (To see a video on this project, visit <http://www.jointuse.org/resources/success-spotlight/?item=2>.)
- 4) The district/COE and agency or organization have reciprocal use of each other's indoor/outdoor recreational facilities for use before, during or after school. For example, the San Carlos Elementary School District and the City of San Carlos in San Mateo County have an agreement to make school facilities open to city residents outside of school hours and to make city facilities available to district recreation programs. (For a copy of the Joint Use Agreement, visit <http://preventioninstitute.org/sa/policies/pdf/text/SCarlosJointUse.pdf>.)



Safe Routes to School Program and policy strategies

Policy Brief | August 2009

Increased physical activity is associated with better academic performance, concentration and classroom behavior.¹ Research shows that school-age children who have opportunities to engage in physical activity are more likely to focus on academic subjects in the classroom.² Thus, students who travel to school by walking, bicycling or using other physically active forms of transportation (including skates, skateboards and non-motorized scooters) may come to school more ready to learn. Supporting active and safe transportation to and from school through local school board policy provides an opportunity to increase daily physical activity and reinforce positive health and academic outcomes among youth (see CSBA's sample board policy and administrative regulation BP/AR 5142.2 – Safe Routes to School Program).

Over the past few decades, the number of students who walk and bicycle to and from school has been declining. A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration found

HOW TO GET STARTED

School districts/COEs can begin developing Safe Routes to School programs by establishing a multidisciplinary team with parent organizations, students, school administrators and staff, local law enforcement, city planners, health officials and other stakeholders. The group can assist with realizing a community vision, developing project proposals and implementing those projects if selected for funding.

There are a variety of resources, as well as examples of successful programs, available to assist districts/COEs and communities in designing and implementing Safe Routes to School programs.

The Federal Highway Administration, the federal agency that oversees the SRTS program, recommends that program implementation address the "5 E's"—education, encouragement, enforcement, engineering and evaluation as outlined below. Some of these

Communicating research: Fact sheets

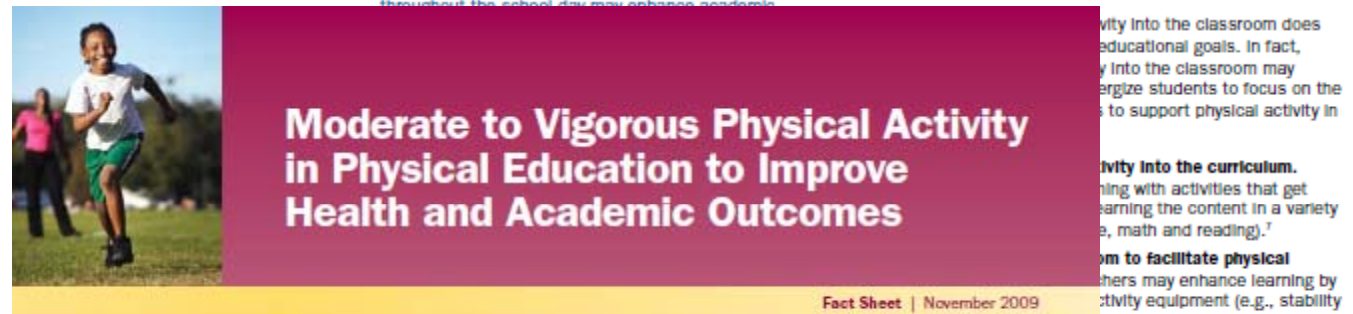


Maximizing Opportunities for Physical Activity during the School Day

Fact Sheet | November 2009

Studies have shown that short bouts of physical activity throughout the school day may enhance academic

CLASSROOM-BASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity in Physical Education to Improve Health and Academic Outcomes

Fact Sheet | November 2009

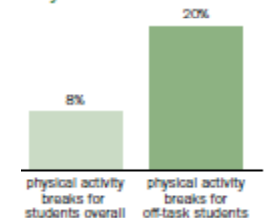
Physical activity into the classroom does not detract from educational goals. In fact, physical activity into the classroom may help energize students to focus on the content to support physical activity in

Physical activity into the curriculum. Integrating physical activity with learning the content in a variety of subjects (e.g., math and reading).⁷

How to facilitate physical activity in the classroom. Teachers may enhance learning by providing physical activity equipment (e.g., stability balls) during regular instruction.⁸ Encouraging physical activity equipment, and seeking contributions from local

Physical activity breaks. Students may get long periods of sedentary time (20 minutes or more) in the classroom. Short stretching or physical activity breaks may exhibit more on-task behavior.

Classroom Behavior: Physical Activity Breaks



WHAT IS MVPA AND HOW MUCH DO STUDENTS NEED?

Moderate physical activity refers to activities equivalent in intensity to brisk walking or bicycling. Vigorous physical activity produces large increases in breathing or heart rate, such as jogging, aerobic dance or bicycling uphill.

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that children and adolescents participate in at least 60 minutes of MVPA most days of the week, preferably daily, in order to attain health benefits.⁹ To help reach this goal, Healthy People 2010, an Initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the President's Council on Fitness, recommends that students be engaged in MVPA for at least 50 percent of P.E. class time.⁹

THE CURRENT STATUS OF P.E.: NOT ENOUGH MVPA

Many P.E. classes do not provide students with adequate



Active Bodies, Active Minds
Physical Activity and Academic Achievement

Fact Sheet | February 2010

With shrinking budgets and increased pressure to improve academic achievement, school governance leaders are facing challenging decisions on behalf of the students in their district. A number of studies show that students who spend time in P.E. or other school-based physical activity increase or maintain their grades

- In a California study, higher achievement was associated with higher levels of fitness for students in grades 5, 7 and 9 and achievement was greater in mathematics than in reading, particularly at higher fitness levels.⁵

Communicating Research: Trainings

- Connection between physical activity and academic performance
- Successful, cost-effective strategies to improve physical activity and physical education
- Policy resources



Policy in Action Trainings

Maximizing physical activity opportunities in tough budget times

Kids who are more physically active tend to perform better academically.

As a school governance leader you have the power to improve the health and academic achievement of students in your schools through a comprehensive school physical activity program. Be a champion for physical activity and register today.

Learn how to:

- Strengthen physical education and physical activity opportunities for students without sacrificing the bottom line.
- Utilize tools, sample policies and case studies to develop comprehensive physical activity policies.
- Develop strategies to improve the quantity and quality of student physical activity before, during and after school through: physical education, recess, classroom activities, safe routes to school, joint use of facilities and before/after school programs.

"Even during difficult budget times, nutrition and fitness should be a priority for all schools and all districts. Our schools have an exceptional opportunity to guide our children toward healthier lifestyles."
—Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Local Policy in Action training schedule

<p>CENTRAL VALLEY Location: Fresno County Office of Education Date: February 17, 2010 Time: 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.</p> <hr/> <p>SHASTA Location: Redding Library Date: February 23, 2010 Time: 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.</p> <hr/> <p>BAY AREA Location: Alameda County Office of Education Date: March 11, 2010 Time: 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.</p>	<p>Who should attend? School board members, superintendents, assistant superintendents, wellness leads and district/county office of education physical education and physical activity leads as a part of a district team.</p> <p>The \$25 registration fee includes lunch, refreshments and materials. Space is limited, register today at www.csba.org/TrainingAndEvents/Events/PhysicalActivityWorkshops.aspx or contact Jessica St. John at 800.266.3582, ext. 3282 or jjohn@csba.org.</p>
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Hosted by the California School Boards Association and California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition) with support provided by a grant from The California Endowment and the Veavin Cases Consumer Settlement Fund.



SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS
Through Healthy Kids and Thriving Families
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Moving forward

- Trainings
February/March 2010
- Dissemination of
resources
- Post-survey to assess
impact of trainings
and resources



Photo by Tim Wagner for HEAC

Expected outcomes

- Elevated importance of PA/PE
- Stronger evidence, skills and tools to improve PA/PE in schools
- Increased number of districts establishing, implementing and/or monitoring policies to support PA/PE

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