research shows

• Students who participate in moderate to high levels of physical activity in school demonstrate better academic performance—even when physical education time cuts into academic coursework. Better academic performance includes:
  • improved math, reading and writing scores,
  • increased concentration and alertness,
  • fewer behavioral problems in class,
  • reduced levels of anxiety and stress.


• Preliminary findings recently released indicate schools show gains in math, language and reading test scores, over time, when more students participate in routine physical activity. Schools with the lowest percent of students participating in physical activity were the lowest performing schools.


recommendations

for Physical Activity:

• Children should get at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day.
Sources: National Association for Sport & Physical Education (NASPE), 2004 (in press).

• Adolescents should get at least 30–60 minutes of physical activity per day. At least twice a week, some of these activities should be strength training and flexibility activities.

for Physical Education in Schools:

• School-based physical education is a strongly recommended approach to increasing physical activity among youth.
Sources: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, MMWR, 2001, 1-16.
physical activity and academics

in their own words

Teachers
“Lack of exercise [is a problem]. We definitely need more... PE time, because I don’t think the students are getting the exercise they need....But I do know as a teacher, if I take the kids outside every morning just for a brisk little ten minute walk, they do so much better in the classroom and especially before tests.”

--New Mexico teacher, 2002

Students
“Running helps me learn more in class,” said one student. Another said that, “As I get more fit, I feel stronger and more ready to learn every day.”


Parents
A 2000 survey of parents done by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) found that:
- 95% think regular, daily physical activity helps children do better academically,
- 95% want physical education to be part of a K-12 school curriculum,
- 67% say they’re willing to pay higher taxes to provide physical and nutrition education classes.


In New Mexico,

almost half (48%) of high school students did not take physical education class in 1999. In 2000, approximately 41% of middle school students attended physical education classes less than 3 days per week.


This fact series is being provided to you by New Mexico’s Prevention Research Center*. Our goal is to translate research into improved national, state, and local public health policies and practices.

* Funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Cooperative Agreement U48-CCU6108180/08

For a full list of sources cited in this Fact Sheet, see http://hsc.unm.edu/chpdp or contact Christine Hollis at chollis@salud.unm.edu

A 1991 survey of principals, conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, showed that most principals feel recess to be “healthy and productive,” and say children who have recess are more alert later in the day.