Physical Activity for Health and Success in School
Nancy Hood, M.P.H., Rachel Mittleman, M.Ed.
Guest Editors

Schools are entrusted with the academic achievement of their students. School officials and educators recognize how strongly students’ health is connected with their ability and willingness to learn. Schools, as microcosms of the larger society, face most child health-related issues on a daily basis. One such concern is the rising rate of childhood overweight and obesity, both of which are associated with type 2 diabetes—increasing among children—future heart disease, cancer and other health problems. Overweight children are subject to depression, teasing and social discrimination, all of which can affect student academic performance. At the same time, schools are sites for developing and encouraging lifelong, positive health behaviors like daily physical activity and good nutrition. Increasing student physical activity is a highly recommended approach to improving their long-term health, well-being and academic success.

Barriers exist, however. How often have school staff heard, “We don’t have TIME for physical education classes because we have to get our test scores up?” Even if this is not actually said out loud, it is implied if and when PE classes are cut and that time is applied to other academic subjects like reading and mathematics. As students age, even fewer hours of PE are available to them at school. New Mexico reflects this trend; only 23% of our high school students participated in moderate physical activity on most days of the week in 2001 (see graph, page 5). The fact is we may be thwarting our intent to improve academic achievement by cutting back on physical education. Research shows that physical activity can positively affect student performance and elevate test scores. This edition of HealthWise: A Bulletin for School and Community Health focuses on the benefits of physical activity for young people and explains how to implement policies or strategies to increase physical activity in schools and communities in enjoyable ways.

One article outlines the evidence demonstrating the relationship between physical activity and academic achievement. School officials and parents can use the information presented here, as well as in the New Mexico Prevention Research Center “Facts About” Series (see page 10), to advocate for and create school policies to keep physical education in the curriculum as a necessary component of efforts to raise test scores.

In response to the question, “how do we fit everything that’s needed into the school day?” we suggest approaches to help schools support and encourage physical activity that do not necessarily depend on having physical education classes. For example, one easy-to-implement school policy is to prohibit the use of physical activity as punishment. Environmental changes that promote physical activity include mapping and measuring a walking path around school grounds for students and staff to use during free time or recess, and involving parents in walking their children safely to school. We present several other tips and resources in this HealthWise edition to help teachers, school health professionals, staff and parents incorporate easy, time-efficient ways to increase physical activity in their schools and classrooms.
The idea that physical activity contributes to children’s health and well-being is not new. One New Mexico teacher, speaking in a 2002 University of New Mexico focus group on school health, reflected this when she said, “We definitely need more physical education time, because I don’t think the students are getting the exercise they need….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.” Despite this, fewer than 10% of all U.S. schools provide daily physical education or its equivalent; in New Mexico, fewer than half of middle school students take physical education classes for just three days per week. One reason schools may not provide enough physical activity is the intense pressure they face to improve students’ standardized test scores. Many cut physical education classes to give students more time to study core academics. Faced with the reality of standardized tests and possible school probation, one message may sway administrators to maintain physical education programs: research shows that physical activity supports academic achievement.

Several school-based studies have shown evidence that giving students additional moderate and vigorous physical activity in school is associated with improved academic achievement and cognition. Findings also indicate that if students spend more time in physical education, this does no harm to their academic performance. In a recent example, New Hampshire announced that a cross sectional study of state elementary schools showed those schools with the highest rates of overweight children had the lowest scores on English and math proficiencies. A more direct relationship between physical activity and academics was demonstrated in California, where a longitudinal study matched reading and mathematics scores from the state standardized achievement test with those from the state-mandated physical fitness test. Findings indicated that both high- and low-performing schools with high percentages of students participating in physical activity had larger gains in test scores than other schools.

Physical activity may also affect academic achievement indirectly. For example, overweight children, especially girls, seem to be more susceptible to depression, more likely to be socially isolated by their peers, have lower levels of self-esteem and higher rates of loneliness and sadness. Teasing children about body weight may lead to emotional problems, among them serious depression, even thoughts of suicide. Research indicates that overweight children with lower levels of self-esteem are more likely to smoke and/or drink alcohol than children with higher self-esteem. Students with risk factors like smoking, drug and alcohol use are more likely to drop out of school and have lower academic achievement.

More than nine out of 10 parents (95%) think that regular, daily physical activity helps their children do better academically. Given that parents recognize the positive effects of physical activity, school boards and principals, supported by their communities, need the most up-to-date information showing that physical activity not only does not hurt, but it may well improve academic achievement. Armed with this important information, schools can begin reversing the trend of taking physical activity out of the school day.

Research shows that physical activity supports academic achievement.

1. NM 2000 Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Report of State Results.

To get a fact sheet (see page 10) about the relationship between physical activity and academics, email requests to PRCPublications@salud.unm.edu.
Helping Students Increase Physical Activity
Nancy Hood, M.P.H., Christine Hollis, M.P.H., M.P.S.

About 13% to 20% of American children (ages 6-17) are overweight, largely because more than half (60%) of them do not participate in organized physical activity out of school hours. In New Mexico, by the time children become high school students, only 23% of them participate in moderate physical activity on five or more days of the week (see graph on page 5). Because of these and other statistics, the U.S. Surgeon General identified schools as key sites to promote health and decrease obesity and overweight in children. School policies can ensure that students are provided with quality daily physical education, recess, unstructured play periods, and/or extracurricular physical activity programs. These programs can help children meet the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) recommendations of at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day.

	Children should participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day.

Children ages 5-12 have developmental characteristics that make them different from adults. This means they require different approaches to their physical activity. Much of their moderate to vigorous activity should be in intermittent, short bursts (10-15 minutes) and accumulated throughout the day, an approach that is developmentally-appropriate and consistent with children’s shorter attention span. NASPE guidelines for children discourage extended periods of inactivity like sitting all day in classrooms or watching TV, or long periods (more than several minutes in length) of continuous vigorous activity, like jogging. It is also important to remember that youth participate in physical activities because the activities are fun and rewarding, not because they know they’re doing something good for their future health.

So, how can school staff help children be more active during the school day? There are quite a few options. For one, school staff should be aware that students often do not effectively use activity areas in the schools to be physically active during their leisure or “open” time—a missed opportunity for increasing their activity levels. Teacher or staff supervision also tends to stimulate more physical activity among students. For these reasons, newer school-based physical activity promotion programs address environmental factors, including teacher support and technical assistance, school-wide policies promoting physical activity, appropriate physical activity curricula, and policies that make activity areas more accessible to students.

One school intervention, Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids (SPARK), increases active time during elementary school physical education classes, teaches movement skills, and is implemented 30 minutes three times a week in an enjoyable way. SPARK (www.sparkpe.org/index.jsp) has increased physical activity in schools. Another program, the Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health (CATCH), has increased the percent of time students spend in moderate-to-vigorous activity during physical education classes. School staff enjoy the CATCH activity boxes that contain flexible, easy-to-use activities for use in their classrooms (www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/chppr/catch/). In a similar vein, the Pathways program (www.hsc.unm.edu/pathways), designed for third, fourth and fifth grade American Indian students, improved activity levels by implementing SPARK in combination with Pathways American Indian games and using short, popular exercise breaks implemented by teachers and others in class.

(See sample activities under Physical Activity at http://hsc.unm.edu/pathways/Downloads/downloads.htm)

School staff can use other creative strategies to add physical activity to the school day. Utah’s Gold Medal School Initiative (http://www.hearthighway.org/school_information/gold_medal_school_initiative/gms_initiative_description.htm) motivates schools to implement school-based policy and environmental changes, such as designing a Gold Medal Mile Walking Program around the school to encourage students and staff to walk that distance each day (with no extra work for teachers). The Take 10® Elementary School physical activity program provides user-friendly activity lesson plans to help teachers lead at least 10 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous (continued on page 7)
How to Get Your School Community Walking
Rachel Mittleman, M.Ed.

Until a few decades ago most students walked or bicycled to school. Now, only a small proportion (10% to 20%) walk to school in American communities. Far more children (over 80%) ride in a school bus or car to school. In addition, almost two-thirds (62%) of American children aged 9-13 do not take part in organized physical activity during non-school hours, and 23% do not participate in any free-time physical activity. Because children today are far less physically active than those in previous generations, walking to school is a missed opportunity, especially because it is free, easy to do, and fun.

Despite the fact that physical activity enhances academic performance as well as good health and fitness, very few schools provide daily physical education for the entire school year for students in all grades. Students may not be getting the level of physical activity they need. A New Mexico teacher participating in a University of New Mexico focus group on school health issues noted, “I don’t think kids get outside and play. I don’t know many kids who ride their bikes anymore. A lot of parents write excuses for kids saying, ‘Don’t send so and so to PE because she or he doesn’t like to run.’ I see a lot of students that are seriously overweight. Walking to school is one way to get children moving. If children walk regularly, it not only improves their health today, but also creates positive lifelong attitudes and skills toward physical activity that they will carry into adulthood.

Although people have identified barriers to walking to school, such as distance, traffic dangers, bad weather and crime, there are many fairly easy ways to help students walk safely during the school day. One way is to start up a before- and after-school walking program at your school such as the Walking School Bus, Walking Wednesdays and Safe Routes to School programs. These programs increase opportunities for daily physical activity by having children walk safely to and from school in groups accompanied by adults. Not only does this ensure safety and enjoyment, but both parents and children end up benefiting, both physically and socially, by participating in these school walking programs.

The Walking School Bus program (www.walking schoolbus.org), for example, makes walking to school safer by providing adult supervision of children walking to school. Interested parents volunteer on certain assigned days to lead the group walk to school following the safest identified route. In addition, with their teachers’ help, students can track and record the number of miles they walk to or in school on a weekly basis. Walking Wednesdays adds to the Walking School Bus program by providing participating volunteer parents and grandparents who lead student walking groups with a get-together and healthful snacks on the first Wednesday of each month. This aspect of the program helps develop a stronger sense of community involvement and increases interaction among parents and school staff, as well as providing exercise and incentives.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Safe Routes to School program (www.nhtsa.gov) also encourages parents and students to walk or bike to school, but provides schools with the means to evaluate environmental conditions like traffic lights, traffic flow, sidewalk availability and car speed to identify and ensure a safe route to school for the walking program. Older students could be involved in these monitoring efforts as a service learning project for class. You can find more information on implementing these programs, or registering your school at: www.walktoschool.org or www.iwalktoschool.org.

Walking in your school environment can also be promoted by doing walking sessions with pedometers during classroom time and in the PE facilities. This not only increases daily physical activity but integrates it into the daily core curriculum. Using pedometers, creating maps, and calculating steps and distance are examples (continued on page 5)
of how physical activity and math skills can be learned at the same time. In schools where children are bused in from long distances, teachers and staff can organize a walking program during school hours, like that of the Utah Gold Medal Mile Walking Program (http://www.tricountyhealth.com/september2003.htm).

Your entire school and surrounding community—volunteers, parents, school nurses, educational assistants, PTA/PTO or school health advisory committee members—can participate and become more active during the school day. In these ways, a walking program can be tailored to meet the needs and resources of your school and community, while providing several health, social and academic benefits to your students, their families, and school staff.


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**“Slip! Slop! Slap! Wrap!”= Sun Safety**

Christine Hollis, M.P.H., M.P.S.

Mae West once said, “Too much of a good thing is wonderful.” The same humorous statement cannot be said of sunlight. On one hand, low levels of exposure to sunlight help cheer people up, feel good on the skin, and help the body produce Vitamin D, a protective factor against heart disease and osteoporosis. On the other hand, too much of a good thing—unprotected exposure to the sun’s ultraviolet rays—can lead to painful sunburns, wrinkled skin later in life, and in some cases, to skin cancer.

Because much exposure to sunlight occurs during childhood and adolescence (teens are less likely to protect themselves),¹ what guidelines exist to protect children from too much sun as they play and get needed physical activity outdoors during recess, free time, or outside school hours? Since unprotected skin can burn within 12 minutes, the American Cancer Society (ACS) provides this easy-to-remember message to remind youth, parents, teachers, camp counselors and others how to protect their skin and eyes: “Slip! Slop! Slap! Wrap!” This means:

- Slip on a shirt,
- Slop on sunscreen (with an SPF of 15 or higher),
- Slap on a hat with a wide brim to shade face, ears, neck, and
- Wrap on sunglasses!”²

Also, try to avoid being in the sun between the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. when ultraviolet rays are most intense. Schools can implement policies to schedule recess before 10:00 a.m. and to provide shade (plant trees, set up tents/tarps) on or near the playground. White T-shirts do not provide much protection. Clothes that give better protection against the sun’s rays include (a) darker clothing instead of white, (b) cloth made of tightly woven fabric, (c) loose clothing, and (d) long sleeves, pants and skirts.

The role of sunscreen in preventing skin cancer is complex. Since studies suggest that sunscreen use might tempt people to increase their total time in the sun, the International Agency for Research on Cancer recommends that sunscreen “not be used as the sole method for skin cancer prevention….”.³ In other words, “slip on clothing, slap on a hat, wrap on sunglasses, stay in the shade during peak sun hours, and slop on the sunscreen” for best protection.

So I’m in Charge of Recess: How Do I Keep Students Safe on the Playground?

Jane Moorman B.S.

Most adults remember the joys of romping on school and community playgrounds. In fact, playgrounds are a “great asset for the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of children at play,”¹ and they are a much-used resource during school recess. Because injuries can occur, however, school playgrounds should also be well-designed, safe and supervised. The National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS) identifies four major factors that help improve playground safety: appropriate surfacing to cushion falls, age-appropriate equipment design, carefully maintained equipment, and high quality supervision. Here’s how playground supervision by adults can ensure safe physical activity for students.

NPPS Director Dr. Donna Thompson has described three main types of playground-related injuries that can be prevented: injury on or off equipment, self-injury, and injury from interaction with others. Interaction-related injury occurs when two or more children are involved in an activity that might lead to incidental or deliberate contact and makes up 53% of the incidents on playgrounds. Supervision by alert adults can help reduce these types of injuries. Research by Dr. Lawrence Bruya showed that when students follow consistent playground safety rules and are monitored by adults, injury rates can decrease as much as 92%.²

When schools establish policies promoting recess and physical activity, they can improve the success of playground safety by involving students in developing rules of good conduct and educating their schoolmates about them. One key to success is to have a list of basic safety rules or guides such as: be safe, respect others, respect property, and be responsible—while having fun. Second, be sure students understand these rules. Teachers can explain or demonstrate rules in class before students go to recess. Or, students can be actively involved—perhaps creating a video to introduce acceptable ways to play on equipment.

A third key to success is to ensure that teachers, education assistants, or volunteer parents who supervise students at recess know how they can best enforce safe and acceptable play. One enjoyable way to improve playground supervision skills is to be trained in the “H.E.L.P.” procedure before donning our whistles, supervisor’s vests and emergency fanny packs. H.E.L.P. stands for: How children play, Eye control, Limit the number of children on equipment, and Positive proximity interaction. Regarding the “H,” educators know recess is when children have fun and interact in a normal manner with each other, running, jumping, and moving around in creative ways to explore their playground environment. At the same time, children can sometimes hug, tackle or push each other, which may cause injury. Teaching children respectful ways to play with each other by rewarding positive behaviors helps develop their social skills. At the same time, playground supervisors need to enforce penalties for unsafe play behaviors so no one will be hurt.

It is human nature to see if someone is watching us before causing mischief. The same is true on the playground, and this is the “E” of eye control. A student thinking about breaking a rule will look toward adult supervisors to see if they are watching. At that moment a supervisor can stop inappropriate behavior with “THE LOOK.” As having eye control of the area means that supervisors see potential problems before they happen, supervisors should constantly scan the play area for potential trouble. Scanning should be done in a 10 second scanning pattern, first checking the overall activity on the playground as well as the equipment, then quickly looking from cluster to cluster of children. If needed, a supervisor then makes individual eye contact with certain children in the clusters; after that, she or he scans the equipment for potential problems. A teacher, educational assistant or other adult should continuously repeat this scanning pattern throughout the play period.

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Helping Students Increase Physical Activity (continued from page 3)

physical activities during class time while integrating them into academic lessons (www.take10.net). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) promotes the “KidsWalk to School” program to increase the number of children walking to school safely (http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk). Having found that students (grades 3-6) think physical activity is fun, but consider physical education and exercise to be boring, the CDC also runs the national “VERB” Campaign to help youth increase the number of hours they are physically active by adding an extra hour per week in interesting ways (http://www.cdc.gov/youthcampaign/). Other creative ideas: develop or support school policy to not restrict recess or use physical activity as punishment, teach kids non-competitive games/activities they can do on their own, and support staff as good role models.

VERB Campaign materials can be found at http://www.cdc.gov/youthcampaign/

The National Program for Playground Safety provides a simple scoring sheet for schools to “grade” their own playgrounds on safety factors. You can access, download and print this easy-to-use report card and the scoring system at: www.uni.edu/playground/report/blank_report.html.

2. NM Public Education Dept, 2001 NM Youth Risk & Resiliency Survey: Report of State Results.

Helping Students Increase Physical Activity (continued from page 3)

The favorite piece of playground equipment may become an injury hazard if too many children play on it at once—hence the “L,” or limit. Manufacturers determine and identify the acceptable number of participants for their equipment. If the school no longer has such information, staff should use common sense to determine how many children can safely play on a piece of equipment.

Finally, a good supervisor constantly moves in a random pattern, reaching approximately 30 different spots on the playground during a 15-minute period. The “P” of proximity control is the best way to stop trouble before it gets out of hand. A simple positively phrased warning to a child may prevent a trip to the nurse’s office. This need to consistently move and scan the playground means that qualified supervisors get physical activity themselves, as they should not stand and visit with co-workers or a group of children.

Supervision should not be done alone. School policy should recognize that if there is only one adult on the playground during a play period, this individual cannot be expected to provide high quality care for the children. A general rule is to have at least two adults supervising; ideally there should be an adult to student ratio of around 1:40. The number of supervisors is also determined by the design of the playground. If there are blind spots, or if the size of the area is too large for just two people, additional supervisors should be added. By creating policies that encourage safety on the playgrounds, schools can help ensure that their students get adequate physical activity while having fun.

Lesson Plan: Students Making Playgrounds

SAFE

Level: Elementary School
Objective: Students will identify the four areas of playground safety using the acronym SAFE.

Materials: Stopwatch/timer, flash cards spelling out S-A-F-E

Ask students if they know anyone who was injured or hurt on a playground. What happened?

Ask how often they think a child goes to the emergency room because s/he was hurt on a playground? (Answer: Every 2 ½ minutes a child is taken to the emergency room for playground injuries in the U.S.) Set the timer to go off every 2 ½ minutes during the discussion to show students how often a child is hurt. Select a child to go to a designated “hospital” area of the room each time it goes off, but keep talking.

Tell students: This does not mean we should stop playing on the playground! We want you to have fun and be safe when you play outside, so let’s talk about playground safety. There are four ways for schools to make a playground safe. Show the flash cards (point to each in turn) that spell out S-A-F-E, and tell them this is the way to remember.

- **S** is for “**S**ee who’s watching over you. What does it mean? Why is it important for adults to watch while you play on the playground? (Answer: Adults know you like to run, jump and explore the playground. But sometimes things happen and you need adults’ help.) Can you think of a time you needed an adult to help you? What happened?

- **A** means **O.K. for your “A”ge.** You can have more fun, and we try to keep you safe by making sure playground equipment—like slides or swings—is “right” for you. Students can get hurt more often if they play on equipment that is too big or little for them. If small children play on equipment meant for older kids, the handles, railings or steps may be too big for them, so they slip, fall or get hurt. Older children who play on equipment too small for them can get bored—then use the equipment in ways it’s not supposed to be used and get hurt. So, if you need help, who can help you decide what equipment is best for you? (Answer: Adult supervisors—point to the **S** card.) Once you know, you can help younger children find the right playground equipment for them.

- **F** means “**F**”alls should be softer. Have any of you fallen on the sidewalk or street? What happened? How did you feel? Sidewalks and streets are made of concrete and asphalt. It’s good to ride your bike or skateboard on them, but it really hurts when you fall. That’s why playground equipment should not have hard stuff, like concrete, underneath. What do you think it should have underneath? (Answer: Soft material, like sand, wood chips, rubber or small stones (pea gravel). [Teacher: show sand, gravel, if possible.] That way, if you fall, it won’t hurt as much.) What can you do if the playground equipment has hard stuff underneath it? (Answer: Don’t play on it, talk to adults, like teachers and look for equipment with soft surfacing.) What should you do if there’s no soft surface under swings and slides? (Answer: Tell other children not to use these swings or slides; ask an adult to help you; push or rake some soft surfacing underneath them if it’s around.)

- **E** is “**E**”nd broken equipment. When something is broken, what can you do? (Answer: Ask adults to fix it or change it!) If we do not fix it, what happens? (Answer: It won’t work, so you can’t use it.) When lots of kids use the playground, equipment, like slides or monkey bars, they can break. Adults should all check slides, swings, teeter-totters and other equipment to be sure it’s in good condition. But you can help! If you see something wrong, like splinters in the wood, or a broken step on the slide, you can tell adults to get it fixed.

The next part of this lesson should be done with the students outside on the playground.

Give the children, in teams, the following “report card” and get them to move (be physically active) about the playground (under your supervision) and complete the checklist by observation. When you are back in

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the classroom, have them help you tally the results, and
determine how safe the school playground is. They can
assign a “grade” to the school playground.* You might
have them draft a report to the principal, with ideas to
make the playground safer.

Review the four components of a SAFE playground: See
who’s watching (supervision), Age-OK (age-appropriate
equipment), softer Falls (soft surfaces for falls), and End
broken equipment (equipment maintenance). [Teachers:
use age-appropriate language for your students.]

*Calculating your playground’s grade.

For example, answers that describe a safer playground are:
(1) no, (2) yes, (3) no, (4) yes, (5) yes, (6) no,
(7) no, (8) no, (9) no, (10) no, (11) no, (12) no,
(13) at least 1 adult for 40 children.

Thus, for calculating grades:
11-13 correct answers = A
9-10 correct answers = B
7-8 correct answers = C
5-6 correct answers = D
4 and below = F

Call 1-800-554-PLAY, National Program for
Playground Safety for suggestions to make the
playground safer.

Lesson adapted from one on the National Program for
Playground Safety website at www.uni.edu/playground/
resources/lesson_plan.html.
Become HealthWiser
Additional Resources

• New Mexico’s Public Education Department and Department of Health are again offering the School Health Education Institute (SHEI) and Health is Elementary (HIE) this Fall, 2004 for educators. In these 2-day trainings specialists in physical activity, nutrition, school safety, alcohol, tobacco and drug prevention, sexuality education and HIV prevention provide interactive sessions to: enhance teachers’ ability to integrate health topics into their subject area. For information, check: www.healthierschools.org or www.kessjones.com.

• Systematic reviews of published studies done for the Task Force on Community Preventive Services found the following.
  • Education and policy approaches in primary schools are effective in getting children to “cover up” and protect themselves from the sun.
  • There is insufficient evidence to show educational and policy approaches in secondary schools are effective in improving “covering up” or sun avoidance behaviors. This does not mean interventions do not work, only that more research is needed.

For specific information, go to: www.thecommunityguide.org/cancer/. For information on current school guidelines, go to: www.cdc.gov/cancer/nscpep/skin.htm.

• October 4-8, 2004 is International Walk to School Week. Communities can register events online, and people with expertise or resources to support community efforts can register online at www.walktoschool.org. For more information see www.pedbikeinfo.org, and/or www.walkinginfo.org, or www.bicyclinginfo.org.

• The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) provides two guides for schools and communities. These are the Moving into the Future: National Standards for Physical Education and Physical Activity for Children: A Statement of Guidelines for Children Ages 5-12. For information, go to: www.aahperd.org/naspe.

Updates:
• The Spring 2004 HealthWise reported on childhood immunizations. The CDC lists updated recommendations for immunizations, including those for influenza, for July-December 2004 at www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/child-schedule.htm#Printable. In addition, a new Institute of Medicine report explaining that autism is not linked with vaccines is available at: www.cdc.gov/nip/news/iom-thim5-18-04.htm#Conclusions.

• CDC School Health Index: The third edition of this self-assessment and planning tool for schools is now online and addresses safety, physical activity, healthful eating, and tobacco prevention programs and policies. For more information, go to: http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/HealthyYouth/

CHPDP publishes a Fact Sheet series with topics of interest to anyone involved with health issues in New Mexico. This series helps decision-makers and practitioners translate current research findings into improved public health policies and practices. The first two fact sheets are available. The first provides information on the link between physical activity and academics; the second focuses on obesity and the role of physical activity.

For a copy of any of the fact sheets in this series, go to our website at: http://hsc.unm.edu/chpdp/Publications/fctsheets.htm or contact Linda J. Peñaloza at (505) 272-4462 or PRCPublications@salud.unm.edu.
An Apple a Day: Info Bites

- 95% of parents in the U.S. think physical education should be part of a school curriculum for all students, grades K-12.
  - True
  - False


- An example of appropriate continuous physical activity for children ages 6-12 is bike riding.
  - True
  - False

Answer: True. Continuous physical activity is movement that lasts several minutes without a rest period. Long periods of continuous physical activity are not considered age- or developmentally-appropriate for children unless a child self-selects that activity. (NASPE. (2004). Physical Activity for Children: A Statement of Guidelines for Children Ages 5-12.)

Physical activity: bodily movement produced by the contraction of skeletal muscle which substantially increases energy expenditure. It includes exercise, sport, dance and other movement forms. (NASPE. (2004). Physical Activity for Children: A Statement of Guidelines for Children Ages 5-12.)

Physical education: planned, sequential instruction that promotes lifelong physical activity. It helps develop basic movement and sports skills, and physical fitness, and enhances intellectual, social and emotional abilities. (Marx & Wooley. (1998). Health Is Academic, p. 4.)

If you are planning and/or providing physical activity and intramural programs for children in grades K-12, you can find guidelines for quality physical education and activity, after-school physical activity, and intramural sport programs at the National Association for Sport & Physical Education website, at: www.aahperd.org/naspe.

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We encourage readers to share their experiences by submitting articles or reviews related to planning, implementing, or evaluating health promotion and disease prevention programs—or simply send us your suggestions for topics. A copy of our “Guidelines for Submission of Manuscripts” is available on request.

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