

Physical Activity Guidelines for Vermont Schools

Active Students are Better Learners!

Rationale:

The below rule is based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendation that "children and adolescents should do 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity each day."¹ It is acknowledged that family and communities must also shoulder responsibility for engaging youth in daily physical activity. Collectively, schools, families and communities can achieve this goal, which has been shown to improve readiness to learn, academic performance, and student health.² Despite this recommendation and compelling research, we know that in Vermont only 29% of middle school youth and only 25% of high school youth meet this recommendation for daily physical activity time.³

Rule:

The Vermont State Board of Education's *Education Quality Standards*⁴ state that:

"Each school shall offer options for students in grades K-12 to participate in at least 30 minutes of physical activity within or outside of the school day. Physical activity may include recess and movement built into the curriculum, but does not replace physical education classes."

Guidelines:

In order to meet this requirement, the following guidelines are provided:

- Physical activities should be of moderate to vigorous intensity. Exercises and movements that increase breathing and heart rate typically fall into this category.
- 30 minutes of physical activity may be broken into smaller time segments, such as three 10 minute exercise bouts, to accommodate a school's schedule.⁵
- Provide a variety of physical activity opportunities throughout the day: before, during, and after school.
- Consider safety, space, time, and age appropriateness when selecting activities.
- Plan time and strategies; such as slow, deep breathing, to help students calm their bodies and minds before transitioning to the next academic block.

¹ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Retrieved 5/27/14 from:

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [The Association Between School-Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance](#), April 2010. Retrieved 5/27/14.

³ [Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), 2013. Retrieved 6/27/14 from:

⁴ Vermont State Board of Education, *Education Quality Standards*, p8. 4/5/2014.

⁵ Electronic communication with Dr. Darla Castelli, University of Texas at Austin. 6/26/14.

Suggested Local Strategies:

- Provide all staff with professional development that focuses on:
 - research about the relationship between physical activity and learning,
 - strategies for engaging students in physical activity in a variety of settings,
 - skills for leading non-competitive and cooperative physical activities that include and accommodate all levels of student skills, and
 - behavior management strategies for physical activity settings.
- Modify the environment⁶ – inside and outside of school – to stimulate physical activity (e.g., signs, posters, pedestrian/bicycle safety markings, playground markings, equipment, etc.).
- Engage students as leaders who encourage their peers to be active.
- Establish an “Active Learning Champion” who will lead a team of individuals that will develop, implement, and evaluate a school-wide physical activity plan.⁷

Suggested Local Policy Ideas:

In addition to the above programmatic guidance, the following suggestions for physical activity policy are provided. Consider updating your school wellness policy to:

- limit sedentary activity to no more than 60 minutes at one time⁸; and
- prohibit use of physical activity as either reward or punishment for behavior. This should include not withholding a student from participating in recess to complete assigned academic work.

⁶ CATCH monthly webinar: *Active Play-Active Learning*. Dr. Andrew Springer. 5/28/2014.

⁷ CATCH monthly webinar: *Active Play-Active Learning*. Dr. Andrew Springer. 5/28/2014.

⁸ Dialogue4Health webinar: *Moving Kids Towards Success! School Policies that Support Active, Attentive Students*. Drs. Castelli, Gamble and Sanchez. 5/14/2014.