



Vermont Healthy Schools Resource:

Physical Activity



SUMMARY

A. Recess

1. Supervised unstructured active play, commonly referred to as recess is offered daily for all students pre-K–8. Recess is in addition to a student’s physical education class and not substituted for physical education class.
 - [Active Recess](#)
2. Recess and other physical activity shall not be taken away as a form of discipline unless doing so is directly related to a student’s behavior during recess.
3. Proper equipment and a safe area are designated for recess.
 - [Recess Equipment](#)
 1. Opportunities are provided for students to be physically active during the school day, in a safe environment, beyond the physical education class. Activities may include open time in the gymnasium, walking programs or aerobic activities.
 - [Activity During the School Day](#)

B. Interscholastic Sports (Athletics)

1. Instruction/coaching is designed to develop sport-specific skills that are based on appropriate teaching/learning progressions.
2. Instruction/coaching provides a learning environment that is appropriate to the characteristics of the athletes and goals of the program.
3. Instruction/coaching utilizes a variety of teaching strategies to improve athletic performance and development.
4. Instruction/coaching uses appropriate forms of motivation and provides constructive feedback to athletes.
 - [Interscholastic Sports \(Athletics\)](#)

C. Before and After-School Programs

1. The school works with the community to provide an avenue for reaching all students’ before and after school through organized physical activities, e.g., intramurals, interscholastic sports, community-based programs and other activities.
 - [Increasing Activity Before and After School](#)
2. Use of the school facilities by community members for physical activities is encouraged.
 - [Opening School Facilities for Community Use](#)

ACTIVE RECESS

Implementation Ideas

- Encourage and facilitate physical activity during recess so that students work toward achieving the CDC's recommendation of sixty minutes per day for children.
- Set up assorted activities on the blacktop, such as hopscotch, jump rope and four square.
- Play a large group activity with everyone involved, such as volleyball or kickball.
- Assign students to different groups for organized physical activities, and let them rotate stations after a few minutes.
- Have one large individual event in a designated area, such as class walks or runs.
- Start a walking club. Track student distance on a large visible map across Vermont or across the US.
- Have the physical education teacher instruct all students on proper use of playground equipment.
- Have a teacher offer prompts and encouragement for activity to engage students:
 - How many times can you jump the rope in one minute?
 - How many times can you go across the horizontal ladder?
 - How many baskets can you make in one minute?
- If recess must be moved indoors due to weather conditions, use vacant classrooms, all- purpose rooms, cafeterias, gymnasiums or hallways for an active recess. Ideas:
 - Set up fitness stations in the halls.
 - Plan a *hall walking* program. Measure out a mile loop through the school for students to walk.
 - Play music and make up dance moves.

Vermont Example

The **Barre Town Middle and Elementary School** (PK–8, 1030 students) in Barre began a recess walking club for their third grade students. Over one hundred third graders are encouraged to walk during their recess and are given incentives to participate. The program is run by a para-educator who is paid with money from grants or EPSTD dollars.

Resources

National

- NASPE's *Recess in Elementary Schools* is a position paper outlining reasons to include recess in children's days and recommendations on providing quality recess:
http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/pdf_files/pos_papers/current_res.pdf
- The *Active and Healthy Schools* program offers resources to improve the health of elementary and middle school students by changing the overall school environment. It includes ideas for classroom activity breaks, playground management tips, before- and after-school physical activity programs and school environment signage:
http://www.activeandhealthyschools.com/index.cfm?PAGE_ID=2
- Mileage/walking club resources that could be used to structure recess time include:
 - Feelin' Good Mileage Club www.fitnessfinders.net
 - PE Central Pedometer Web site www.pecentral.org/pedometry/index.html
 - 28 million footsteps across America challenge www.creativewalking.com/school.html

RECESS EQUIPMENT

Implementation Ideas

- Set up playgrounds that encourage activity such as hopscotch, four square, basketball, twenty-one or shuffleboard.
- Paint markings on the playground surface such as letter squares, mazes, castles, pirate ships, ladders giant clock faces.
- Measure out distances (one quarter mile or half mile), and start a walking club. Encourage students, teachers and staff to participate.
- Increase the available permanent equipment on the playground, such as basketball hoops, volleyball nets, and/or tennis courts. If equipment needs updating, apply for a grant.
- Increase the number of balls, jump ropes, hula hoops, etc., on the playground.
- Paint playground equipment with bright fluorescent colors.
- Use pre-developed design templates specifically designed to increase physical activity on the playground.
- If you have a park or youth club with fitness facilities nearby, share resources!

Vermont Example

The **Winooski School District** in Winooski started an active indoor recess program. Using grant money, they purchased several pieces of fitness equipment and games that can be used in the gym to promote active play when the weather does not allow for outdoor recess. This gives students the opportunity and incentive for physical activity regardless of weather conditions.

Resources

Vermont

- The goal of Vermont's Department of Buildings and General Services Recreational and Educational Facilities Grant program is to provide competitive grants to municipalities and nonprofit organizations to stimulate the creation and development of recreational and educational opportunities in Vermont communities: http://www.bgs.state.vt.us/news_and_links.htm
- Collaborate with or use natural resources nearby:
 - Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation <http://www.vtstateparks.com/>
 - Vermont Recreation and Parks Association, <http://www.vrpa.org/>, includes links to town recreation departments in Vermont.

National

- NASPE's *Guideline for Facilities, Equipment and Instructional Materials in Elementary School Physical Education* provides standards and recommendations for safe and effective PE materials, equipment and facilities: http://www.aahperd.org/NASPE/pdf_files/pos_papers/instructional_mat.pdf
- Resources for improving or creating playgrounds: <http://www.kaboom.org/GettingStarted/PlaySpaceSafetyAccessibility/tabid/2011/Default.aspx>
- Peaceful Playgrounds resources are designed to help introduce children and school staff to the many choices of activities available on playgrounds and field areas. They provide blueprints to assist with measurements, layout, spacing and game placement, as well as provide an overall picture of the final design outcome of a Peaceful Playground: <http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/>

ACTIVITY DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Implementation Ideas

- Have students get up and stretch, jump or dance for five minutes between subjects.
- Start or end each day with ten minutes of activity such as stretches or aerobic activities.
- Give out pedometers for students to monitor their steps throughout the school day. Encourage students to walk or run extra steps during recess.
- Reward students with physical activity by having extra recess, dancing to music in the classroom for a few minutes or allowing students to earn other extra physical activity time for good behavior during the week.
- For parties make it a dance, hold relays, offer active scavenger hunts or challenge another homeroom to a sport or activity.
- Use lessons that integrate physical activity across all content areas.
- For special events, offer field days, activity-related field trips such as visit a state park, go bowling, have a ski or snowshoe day, fitness fairs or family fitness nights.

Vermont Example

The **Academy School** (K–6, 370 students) in Brattleboro increased student activity during the school day through their Winter Walking Program. This very popular program was designed to increase school community physical activity during the winter months. A quarter-mile walking route was measured around the school's playground, and students, staff and parents were encouraged to walk during recess between mid-January and April. Laps were recorded, and students were honored for their achievements along the way by earning tokens that they proudly wore around their necks or wrists. Every week, successes were posted in the school newsletter, on a bulletin board and during weekly school assemblies. At the end of the program, the whole school participated in a group walking challenge event. The school budget covered the minimal costs of this program for tokens, chains for the tokens, incentive items and prizes.

See [Additional Vermont Examples: Physical Activity/Physical Education](#) for more.

Resources

Vermont

- The Vermont Department of Education has compiled a list of programs and funding sources that have the potential to improve childhood wellness:
http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_coordhealth/resources.html
- Governor's Fit and Healthy Kids Spring and Fall Challenges encourage schools to find creative ways to integrate physical activity (and healthy eating) into the school day:
<http://healthvermont.gov/family/fit/challenge/challenge.aspx>

National

- Specific programs with activities to incorporate into the classroom:
 - Brain Breaks <http://www.emc.cmich.edu/BrainBreaks/>
 - Brain Gym: <http://www.braingym.org/>
 - Energizers: <http://www.ncpe4me.com/energizers.html>
 - Action Based Learning: <http://actionbasedlearning.com/index.shtml>
 - *WinterKids' Outdoor Learning Curriculum*:
<http://www.winterkids.org/OutdoorLearningCurriculumNat/>
 - Maine's *Take Time!* School Resource Packet helps fit in small bits of movement during the school day. The resource packet includes sample classroom physical activities and games that

- are linked to academic content areas and lesson plans, and includes ideas for quick physical activity breaks during the school day: <http://www.maine-nutrition.org/Projects/TTPacket.htm>
- The Active and Healthy Schools Program offers resources to improve the health of elementary and middle school students by changing the overall school environment. It includes ideas for classroom activity breaks, playground management tips, before- and after-school physical activity programs and school environment signage: http://www.activeandhealthyschools.com/index.cfm?PAGE_ID=2
 - Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Healthy Schools Program is a great way for schools to get the help they need to increase opportunities for students. The emphasis is on exercise and play, putting healthy foods and beverages in vending machines and cafeterias, and increasing resources for teachers and staff to become healthy role models. <http://www.healthiergeneration.org/schools.aspx?id=78>

INTERSCHOLASTIC SPORTS (ATHLETICS)

Implementation Ideas

- Review or contact the Vermont Principals' Association (see link below) to see what possible sports programs are available.
- Use this guide and talk with colleagues about healthy fundraisers to help support teams.
- Identify teachers or community members with skills, experience and passion to develop and provide leadership for sport teams.
- Introduce a variety of sports to students, and identify those who exhibit strong interest or skills in particular areas to help get a team going.
- Offer opportunities for volunteer coaches to get training to be a team coach.
- Offer a variety of team levels, such as varsity, junior varsity and intramurals to allow for greater potential student participation.
- Start a Unified Sports™ program which is designed to mainstream special education and other students together in athletic competition. Students learn to recognize people for their abilities and not their disabilities.
- Once programs are established, include lessons on sportsmanship, skill building and teamwork.

Vermont Example

In Morrisville, **Peoples Academy** student Matthew Buckley became passionate about road bike racing during his sophomore year. Science teacher Michael Burris shared his love of this sport and agreed to partner to start an official school bike team. Over the 2006–2007 school year, they submitted grants to Vermont's 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, the Teen Initiated Grant program, the Green Mountain Fund and Concept 2 seeking funding to start a club. Over \$5,000 was raised to cover a stipend for the coach, pay race fees, purchase uniforms and secure four racing bikes, thanks to the generosity of a local bike vendor who offered a significant discount to support establishment of the team. A small dedicated group of students trained throughout the spring and have set precedent for a new wellness option at Peoples Academy.

Resources

Vermont

- Vermont Principals' Association oversees nearly twenty statewide programs from baseball to wrestling. Access sports guides, tournament pairings, division alignments, past champions and Hall of Fame list: <http://www.vpaonline.org/pa2.asp>
- Vermont Special Olympics, Unified Sports™ program: <http://www.vtso.org/programs.php>

National

- The mission of the National Council for Accreditation of Coaching Education (NCACE) is to support qualified coaches for sports participants through programs that provide quality coaching education: <http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=programs-ncace.html>

INCREASING ACTIVITY BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL

Implementation Ideas

- Contact local parks and recreation departments or after-school programs to share resources.
- Start a walking club before or after school. Invite parents to participate, track miles and reward efforts.
- Start a Safe Routes to School program to encourage walking and biking to and from school.
- Encourage families to use community resources—parks, bike paths and trails—with students after school and on weekends.
- Implement an activity-related fundraiser such as the very successful Green Street School example below.
- Encourage students to do active community service, such as volunteering at a local Humane Society, offering to do yard work for a neighbor, or working with trail associations to do trail cleanup or maintenance projects.

Vermont Examples

The **Green Street School** (K–6, 262 students) in Brattleboro developed an innovative way to increase physical activity in the school community while raising funds for class trips, the winter sports program and a school community garden. The school implemented a month-long program encouraging students to engage in active play or moderate movement for a minimum of twenty minutes prior to school at least two days per week. Students went to the community—friends, family, neighbors—to get monetary sponsorship for their activity and raised over \$20,000 through this activity-based program. The event culminated in a celebratory *Finding Fitness Fun Day*.

See [Additional Vermont Examples: Physical Activity/Physical Education](#) for more.

Resources

Vermont

- Vermont Safe Routes to School program, Department of Transportation: <http://www.aot.state.vt.us/progdev/sections/ltf/saferoutestoschoolprogram/vermontsaferoutestoschoolprogram.htm>
- Vermont Department of Health's Fit and Healthy Vermonters program, in collaboration with UVM's Center for Rural Studies, conducted a survey of public resources related to physical activity and nutrition in Vermont's cities and towns in 2005. Search to see what resources are available in your town: <http://crs.uvm.edu/townhealthresources/>
- Vermont Parks and Recreation Association: <http://www.vrpa.org/>
- Vermont Out of School Time Network (VOOST): <http://www.voost.org/>
- John Stetzel director of the Vernon Elementary School Jump Rope Club is available to help other schools start clubs: <http://www.vernon.k12.vt.us/tornadoes/index.html>, or (802) 257-4240 ext. 38
- Girls on the Run Vermont is an organization that coordinates running programs and self esteem building for girls in grades 3–5 and 6–8: <http://www.gotrvt.org/>
- *Many Milers* is a program of RunVermont, Inc. that provides running, activity and nutrition programs for youth ages four to fourteen: <http://www.runvermont.org/youth/mmgeneral.html>

National

- After School Physical Activity: <http://www.afterschoolpa.com/base.html>
- Safe Routes to Schools clearinghouse: <http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>
- After School Physical Activity and Intramural Sports Program guidelines for planning and implementing physical activity and intramural programs for students in grades K–12: http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/pdf_files/pos_papers/intramural_guidelines.pdf

OPENING SCHOOL FACILITIES FOR COMMUNITY USE

Implementation Ideas

- Work with administrators, local school boards and their insurance agents to have the school open during non-school hours for community physical activities.
- Get volunteers to lead *Walk the Halls* or mileage club programs. Invite caretakers, family and community members to participate with students.
- Partner with your local parks and recreation department to offer programming, staff and promote events.
- Get the word out! Send flyers home, post announcements in local newspapers and attract media attention to alert the public about new programs and resources.

Vermont Example

Poultney High School (7–12, 288 students) in Poultney has increased opportunities for school and community physical activity through the creation of a wellness center. With grant monies, the school renovated a 50' x 45' space to house the wellness center. Community members donated fitness equipment such as elliptical trainers, treadmills and weights. Classes in yoga, Pilates, kickboxing, aerobic and strength training are taught by certified community and school personnel. These classes are offered to students and community members alike. While use of the facility is limited to school physical education programs during the day, the center is open to the community starting at 7:00 a.m. through 9:00 p.m. Facility supervision and administrative services are provided by neighboring Castleton State College students who fulfill internship requirements for this work. Maureen Capman, Poultney High School physical educator, proudly reports a large increase of student and community member physical activity as a result of this innovative and collaborative project.

Resources

Vermont

- Vermont Department of Health's Fit and Healthy Vermonters program, in collaboration with UVM's Center for Rural Studies, conducted a survey of public resources related to physical activity and nutrition in Vermont's cities and towns in 2005. Search for your town and scroll down to *Other Policies, Regulations and Practices*, see *Do the public schools in {your town} allow public access to their recreation facilities after school hours?*: <http://crs.uvm.edu/townhealthresources/>

National

- National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities' Community Use of Schools – Policy Issues and Joint Use Agreements is a resource list on policy issues concerning the community use of school buildings and grounds during and after school hours, including examples of joint use agreements: http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/joint_use.cfm
- 21st Century Fund *Recommended Policies for Public School Facilities* contains information for officials and administrators at the state, local, and school district level to improve the creation of schools as centers of community: <http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/publications/modelpolicies/PlanningSectionMay2005.pdf>

Additional Vermont Examples: Physical Activity/Physical Education

Increasing Physical Education Time

As a result of School Wellness Policy development, the wellness committee at the **Danville School** (PK–12, 360 students) in Danville worked with a very supportive principal and the school board to increase the high school PE graduation requirement. The new policy will go into effect for the 2008–2009 school year. In order to be eligible for graduation, the policy requires students to earn three PE credits, twice the Vermont state minimum of 1.5 credits. The school policy extends further to stipulate that no more than one PE credit per year will be credited toward the required total. This caveat was included to ensure that students are physically active during at least three out of four high school years. Implementation is being phased in through gradual schedule changes.

Integrating Physical Education into Other Curricular Areas

At **Lake Region Union High School** (9–12, 367 students) in Orleans, physical educator Gerry Cahill has developed a Lifetime Fitness class that involves daily use of heart rate monitors. Gerry's program is supported by the mathematics and science departments, which require students to record, graph and analyze their heart rate data for fitness changes/trends. For Lifetime Fitness credit, students must also provide written explanation of their fitness training knowledge that includes references to their heart rate data.

Activity during the School Day

The **Winooski School District** implemented the Take 10 for Fitness program in all kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms. During the last class period of the day, a ten-minute video is broadcast into all classrooms. This video guides students and teachers through ten minutes of cardiovascular activities based around different styles of dance, as well as some basic stretching and breathing exercises. The students have enjoyed this, and it is a great way to add an extra fifty minutes of physical activity to the students' school week.

Increasing Activity Before and After School

Fran Alfieri, the physical education teacher at **Whittingham Elementary School and Twin Valley Middle School** (PK–8, 270 students) in Jacksonville, shares his passion for weight training with his students through a very popular after-school Fitness Club. Every fall and spring, during sports off-season, on one to two days per week, free weights and benches are pulled out of storage and set up as a weight lifting area in the school's gym. Students follow a specific program that is safe for their age. A core of about ten students participates regularly, but at times there are as many as eighteen students attending. Most participants are students who do not engage in sports at all and are not the typical athletes. The main cost of the program is the teacher's time and equipment, which has been purchased with the help of a grant from the Lion's Club and other fundraisers.

30+5 is a community effort to encourage young people (6th, 7th and 8th graders) in **Springfield and Windsor** to engage in physical activity and eat more fruits and vegetables. The 30+5 project aims to inspire youth to achieve thirty minutes of physical activity in addition to their regular physical education class, plus eat a minimum of five servings of fruits and vegetables every day (hence, 30+5). When they sign up, students receive *Action Packs*, colorful folders full of fun images and information to inspire them to get their 30+5— thirty minutes of physical activity plus at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Students earn points when they choose to spend their leisure time engaged in physical activity and/or eating fruits and vegetables. This is noted in their Personal Activity Log and submitted to earn activity-promoting prizes such as a \$10 gift card to Olympia Sports, an i-Pod, or a bicycle.

Athletic Director Sue Duprat is proud of the development of the after-school activity program at **Harwood Union High School** (9–12, 655 students) in Duxbury. Initiated this year for the middle and high school students, the program consists of intramurals such as Ultimate Frisbee and flag football, as well as non-competitive ways to be active, such as walking, jogging and *open gym* for students to drop in as they wish. The school also has the Free Ride program, where students are taken to a local ski area for instruction in free-style skiing and snowboarding. Duprat is impressed with attendance of the program, and she reports that the school is looking to expand it for the next academic year.