



Strong minds. Strong bodies. Strong schools.

A partnership of the RI Departments of Education and Health
with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

thrive report

Vol. 1, Number 5, May 2007

May Issue: Physical Activity

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thrive by the numbers

100 Percentage of people who can set a good example by being physically active.

19 Percentage of all high school students who are physically active for 20 minutes or more, five days a week in physical education classes.

60 The number of minutes, per day of age-appropriate physical activity the Surgeon General, CDC and others experts recommend.

37 Percentage of Rhode Island children under 18 considered overweight or obese.

36 Percentage of Rhode Island middle and high schools that support or promote walking or biking to and from

May's Focus: Physical Activity

Welcome to the May edition of the *thrive report* focusing on physical activity. According to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), physical activity is bodily movement of any type that may include recreational, fitness and sport activities such as jumping rope, playing soccer, lifting weights, as well as daily activities such as walking to the store, climbing stairs or raking leaves.

Regular physical activity has beneficial effects on a number of health aspects including muscular strength, aerobic/cardio fitness, bone and body mass, blood pressure, anxiety and stress, and self-esteem. However, many children do not get enough physical activity during the day. According to the 2005 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey results, 32.2% of high school students had insufficient moderate and vigorous physical activity in the past week. SALT survey results from 2005-2006 reveal that 20% of students grades 4-6, 19% of students grades 6-8 and 14% of students grades 9-12 watched four or more hours of television on an average day.

A coordinated approach to school health can reveal many opportunities to incorporate physical activity into the school day. Safe routes to schools can provide secure pathways for students to walk to school. Flexible scheduling for physical education teachers can increase inclusion of physical activity in before and after school programs aligned with physical education standards. Physical activity breaks, incorporated into classroom practice can help reduce stress and increase attention for all students. Finally, the implementation of a daily high quality physical education program for all students can provide a strong foundation for lifelong physical activity practices.

"Do it, move it, make it happen. No one ever sat their way to success." - Unknown.

The Core Issue: Physical Activity

"Improving nutrition in schools is easy. Increasing physical activity is a real challenge". - Deborah Ranaldi, Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition steering committee member

school.

2010 The year by which the CDC would like to see students walking to school (distance under one mile) increase to 50%.

Sources: Rhode Island School Health Profiles, CDC, and thrive

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/adoles.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidwalk/pdf/factsheet.pdf>

<http://www.thriveri.org>

Physical Activity Links

[Action For Healthy Kids](#)

[CDC](#)

[American Heart Association](#)

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The *thrive report* can be found at
www.thriveri.org/report.html

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While it has taken several years, the culture of schools has changed to the point where administrators across the state are leading efforts to improve nutrition. Yet, for the most part, they have only scratched the surface when it comes to physical activity.

Part of the problem is the perception that efforts to increase physical activity run counter to efforts to increase achievement in core subject areas.

There is a limited amount of time in the school day. More activity time means less seat time. And schools are already challenged to meet new state and federal mandates and pressure to boost academic performance.

However, physical activity and academic achievement are not contradictory. First of all, a growing body of research shows that not only do students perform better academically when they are physically active, but also that exercise can actually boost brainpower. More than one study has shown that schools that increase time for physical education classes actually see gains in achievement, even when that means less time for core classes.

Furthermore, schools need to look beyond recess, physical education, and interscholastic sports as the venues for physical activity. Before and after-school programs, clubs, intramurals, safe walking or biking to school programs all present opportunities for students to be physically active, as does the regular classroom.

Bouts of activity need not be long to be worthwhile. Anyone who has ever sat through a long meeting or lecture knows that a short stretch or activity break can go a long way to boost your attention. Schools or teachers that build regular movement into their daily instruction will likely see enhanced learning and wellness.

Fresh from the Field

Submitted by Kathy McCann School Nurse Teacher, Burrillville Middle School

At the Burrillville Middle School, we are always seeking to create innovative programs to get our middle school students engaged. This year the Physical Education Teacher, Donna Roderick and I came up with a program targeting girls who wanted to get more physically fit. We knew we didn't want to have a typical aerobics class, so we met with 5 of the girls and together decided to try a different approach to exercise.

Every Friday afternoon, a group of 8 to 12 seventh and eight grade students gathered with "dance pads" with "dance videos". The pads consist of arrows facing different directions. The participants are directed from a music video with arrows that demonstrate dance steps that become increasingly rigorous. The girls could not get enough of the activity! We did a private weigh-in at the beginning of the 8-week activity, and we ended with a weigh-in. Throughout, we had discussions about healthy food choices and offered related handouts. While not every girl lost weight, each and every one reported that they felt better and had made improved healthy food choices. All signed up for our subsequent classes throughout the year.

There are school systems in the South that have reported using this same dance program during their Physical Education

classes. The students actually race to the gymnasium to get ready to "dance". The boys participate equally with the girls. No one can say why this activity is so popular, but our students tell us that it tests their skills and keeps them interested. The loud music helps too!

We had a great time with the students and hope to see the program utilized on a larger scale. Our students tell us they will miss the routine but intend to continue their "dancing" at home this summer.

To share your first-person success stories in "Fresh from the Field," please email Annemarie.Silvia@ride.ri.gov.

As always, we welcome and encourage your feedback about **thrive**, Rhode Island's Coordinated School Health model. Please email us at rosemary.reilly-chammat@health.ri.gov or midge.sabatini@ride.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

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