
Student Wellness Toolkit: High School

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the benefit of schools
enrolled in the Healthy
Schools Program

More information can be found at
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Student Wellness High School Criteria at a Glance

Bronze: 4 Checklist Criteria Silver: 7 Checklist Criteria Gold: 8 (All) Checklist Criteria	
707	School provides opportunities for students to participate in daily physical activity during the school day (excluding recess and physical education)
708	School utilizes community resources to provide physical activity and/or nutrition education opportunities before or after school
709	School connects students and families with physical activity opportunities in the community
710	School actively supports and promotes walking or bicycling to and from school
711	School policies and practices support that physical activity is not used for or withheld as punishment for students.
712	School offers a range of competitive physical activity opportunities (intramural or interscholastic sports) for all grades before or after the school day
713	School offers a range of non-competitive physical activity opportunities aimed at engaging students in fun, recreational and life-long learning opportunities before or after the school day for all grades
714	School provides access to before and after school offerings by making transportation options available

Rationale

Increasing rates of obesity in children and teenagers have occurred at the same time that physical activity in schools has been decreasing. An estimated 31.2% of children ages 6 to 11 in the United States are overweight or at risk for overweight. In adolescents, ages 12 to 19, 30.9% are overweight or at risk for overweight. While childhood obesity rates increase, opportunities for students to be active have decreased. Between 1991 and 2003, enrollment of high school students in daily physical education classes decreased from 41.6% to 28.4%. Fewer and fewer children walk or ride bicycles to school, eliminating that source of daily physical activity. Recess has been reduced or eliminated in many elementary schools.

Today, obesity is one of the most pressing health concerns for children and physical inactivity is a leading contributor to the epidemic. Children who are overweight or obese face many of the same health problems as adults: high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol. The Surgeon General recommends that children should engage in 60 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week; yet most youth are accumulating far less. Schools serve as an excellent venue to provide students with the opportunity for daily physical activity, to teach the importance of regular physical activity for health and to build skills that support active lifestyles. Unfortunately, most children get little to no regular physical activity while in school.

Physical activity should not be confused with physical education or exercise. Physical activity in an educational setting is defined as behavior consisting of bodily movement that requires energy expenditure above the normal physiological (muscular, cardio-respiratory) requirements of a typical school day (Tennessee Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance).

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Principles that Guided the Development of the Student Wellness Criteria

- Students are on school grounds a significant amount of time each day and physical activity can be integrated in many ways.
- Schools have several opportunities to promote and provide physical activity which can lead to the adoption of a physically active lifestyle outside of the school environment.
- Before and afterschool programs have the potential to improve the health of children by providing programs and services that promote nutrition education and healthy eating habits.
- Before and afterschool programs act as the missing link for many schools unable to provide children with enough physical activity during the school day and also work to enhance the skills being taught in physical education classes.
- Before and afterschool programs serving healthy snacks/meals provide children with the energy they need to fully benefit from educational and enrichment activity offerings.
- Afterschool programs offer a unique opportunity to influence the lifestyles of many children and their families.
- The success of before and afterschool programs rely heavily on staff that is reflective of the school community and receive continued professional development in health-related areas.

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707	School provides opportunities for students to participate in daily physical activity during the school day (excluding recess and physical education)
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Rationale

Regular physical activity, even modest forms, has significant health benefits for students. Because students spend many hours in school, it is an ideal place to provide physical activity opportunities. Classroom teachers can help provide some of the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity throughout the school day. Several studies indicate that activity breaks can improve cognitive performance and classroom behavior.

Action Steps

- Provide multiple opportunities for students to engage in physical activities.
- Participate in fitness alarms. For example, ring the bell at 10 am and 2 pm and have all staff and students participate in physical activity.
- Incorporate brief physical activity breaks, one to two minutes, into each class period. Have students take turns leading various movement activities.
- Integrate movement within core academic lessons, tying physical activity to learner objectives.
- Provide “brain break” opportunities, which involve some type of movement or allows students to be creative. Have students practice spelling or vocabulary words while walking around the room or play a game of charades based on a topic the class is studying.
- Implement physical activity during the “homeroom” or “advisory” period in middle and high schools.
- Start a video exercise library for classroom use.
- Include physical activity opportunities in the school news or morning announcements.
- Incorporate “walk and talk” breaks—take your class out for a walk and have students discuss what they have learned during the class period.
- Model enthusiasm for physical activity by participating in breaks with students and in school employee wellness opportunities.

Recognition Documentation

Describe how the school integrates structured physical activity breaks into daily activities for **all** students.

Examples: Details from district/school written plan, school wide physical activity practices or teacher lesson plans that describe how he/she integrates physical activity breaks into daily activities.

Resources

- [Fitness Trail Stations](#) (Alliance for a Healthier Generation)
- [Just-a-Minute School Program \(Jammin' Minutes\)](#) (Health E-tips)
- [FitDeck Exercise Playing Cards](#) (FitDeck, Inc.)
 - Discount Available

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708	School utilizes community resources to provide physical activity and/or nutrition education opportunities before or afterschool
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Rationale

Increasing community involvement in before and afterschool programs can yield significant benefits to programs and the students that they serve. Community partnerships have the potential to meet a wide variety of needs, from improving participant recruitment and attendance to contributing volunteers or other resources to programs. Outreach is an important way to strengthen before and afterschool programs that promote physical activity and healthy eating. Potential community resources include park and recreation departments, fitness clubs, hospitals and youth-serving organizations. By tapping into existing resources, before and afterschool programs do not have to recreate the wheel but utilize available resources within their community.

Action Steps

Assess your current community resources:

- Is the director of your before and/or afterschool program(s) on your school wellness council?
- Does your school or district wellness committee include before and afterschool stakeholders?
- Do you have programs administered by partner organizations like YMCA or Boys and Girls Clubs?
- Do you communicate with community-based youth organizations to provide students with weekly/monthly updates of physical activities offered in the community?
- Think outside your school building - are there community groups, parents or businesses (i.e. chef, master gardener, grocery store owner, sporting club, dietician, dance or martial arts instructor, etc.) who could provide resources for your before and/or afterschool program(s)?
- Consider partnerships with local park and recreation departments for access to public pools, golf courses, parks, walking trails, etc.

Examples of utilizing community resources:

- Schedule continuous fitness programming with a certified fitness instructor
- Hold an “Afterschool Olympics” fitness event and invite area schools to compete
- Celebrate physical fitness with local youth organizations such as the YMCA’s “Healthy Kids Day”
- Invite a yoga instructor to lead activities that teach “stress relief” strategies
- Contact local fitness facilities and gyms to ask if students can utilize their facilities at a free or discounted rate and/or ask them to provide fitness instructors to visit the school to lead physical activities
- Partner with local hospitals and public health departments to provide nutrition education lessons
- Invite a chef from a local restaurant

Recognition Documentation

Describe how the school utilizes community resources to provide physical activity and nutrition education opportunities for students.

Examples: An instructor from a local fitness center comes to our school twice a week in January and February to provide Pilates classes for our students, our local hospital sends a registered dietician to our school three times a year to provide nutrition education to students, the owner of our grocery store donates fruits and vegetables to our school that are used for taste testing, our community racing club leads our spring walking/running club for students and provides registration costs for students interested in running the Memorial Day 5k, etc.

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Resources

- [Building Community Partnerships](#) (Child Trends)
- [Building Healthy Communities Program](#) (The AfterSchool Corporation)

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709	School connects students and families with physical activity opportunities in the community
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Rationale

Healthy schools are integral proponents in the fight against childhood obesity. Equally important are safe, healthy home lives. Connecting students and families with opportunities to be physically active in their communities promotes a concerted culture of health and wellness. Engaging in physical activity as a family can be a fun way to get everyone moving. Studies show that kids who believe they are competent and have the skills to be physically active are more likely to be active. Those who feel supported by friends and family to become active, or surrounded by others interested in physical activity, are more likely to participate. Schools can act as mediators to engage and encourage families to be active. (Source: <http://www.letsmove.gov/active-families>)

Action Steps

Consider how you currently connect students and families to physical activity in the community:

- Do you send home flyers or post community events in your schools newsletter or on the school website?
- Do you have information on physical activities in the community in the front office or on a parent bulletin board?
- Do you have programs administered by partner organizations like YMCA or Boys and Girls Clubs that also provide weekend and summer activities?
- Do you communicate with community-based youth organizations to provide students with weekly/monthly updates of physical activities offered in the community?
- Does your school reach out to community partners to collect information for families about programs/activities the community partners are offering?

Examples of connecting to the community:

- Provide students and families with information to participate in a charity walk or run
- Provide students with a monthly calendar of physical activity events in the community
- Create a bulletin board to post flyers/brochures of physical activity opportunities in the community for students and families
- Invite a guest to discuss bicycle safety and provide students and families with maps of community bike trails
- Ask your school's PTA/PTO to provide information about community fitness events

Recognition Documentation

Describe how physical activity opportunities in the community are promoted by the school.

Examples: Flyers were provided to our students and families to participate in a local 5K race/walk, our teachers and students participated in a benefit softball tournament for a local charity, at parent pick-up we have a "Fun & Active Families Bulletin Board" to post community events at local parks, public pools, golf courses, walking trails, etc., community events are included on the school/district website and in the monthly newsletter.

Resources

- [Building Community Partnerships](#) (Child Trends)
- [BodyWorks](#) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

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710	School actively supports and promotes walking or bicycling to and from school
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Rationale

Walking to school is a missed opportunity for physical activity. Roughly 10% of children nationwide walk to school regularly. Even among those kids living within a mile of their school, only 25% are regular walkers. Walking and bicycling to school can provide children with more opportunities to be physically active at no extra cost to parents.

Action Steps

- Convene a group and hold an informative kick-off meeting
- Conduct a walk/bike audit
- Identify issues such as community design, safety, time and convenience
- Identify solutions such as safe routes, crossing guards; educate staff, students and parents on pedestrian and bicycling safety; provide secure bicycle parking
- Make a plan—include solutions, resources necessary, timeline, etc.
- Fund the plan—federal funding is available through state departments of transportation
- Act on the plan
- Evaluate, make improvements and keep moving

Recognition Documentation

Check all the following the school uses to promote walking and bicycling to and from school:

- Students receive instruction on walking/bicycling safety
- Safe routes program is promoted to students, staff and parents via newsletters, websites, local newspaper
- Crossing guards are utilized
- Crosswalks exist on streets leading to schools
- Walking school buses are utilized
- Bicycle parking is provided
- Number of children walking to and from school is documented
- Number of children biking to and from school is documented
- Maps of school environment (sidewalks, crosswalks, roads, pathways, bike racks, etc.) have been created and distributed
- Other – please describe additional efforts the school has in place to promote walking and bicycling to and from school.

Resources

- [Safe Routes to Schools Guide](#) (The National Center for Safe Routes to School)
- [KidsWalk-to-School](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Safe Routes to School](#) (U.S. Department of Transportation)

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711	School policies and practices support that physical activity is not used for or withheld as punishment for students.
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Rationale

The Healthy Schools Program views the school setting and its administrators as a vehicle and actors of change. As advocates for health-promoting behaviors, the use of physical activity as a punishment is contrary to fundamental health-enhancing practice. When used as a punishment, physical activity can be viewed as unenjoyable and associated with consequence. To become and remain active into adulthood, youth need to encounter positive physical activity experiences. If a student needs to be disciplined, effective educators know what types of strategies to use, and if physical activity is being used for punishment, educators must be informed of appropriate discipline strategies. Most experts do not support the use of physical activity as a punishment, including the National Association for Sport and Physical Education and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Action Steps

- Compose a policy statement prohibiting the use of physical activity as a punishment
- Research appropriate, alternative discipline procedures
- Communicate the policy statement and alternative practices to staff, faculty, students and families

Alternatives to Physical Activity as Punishment

Successful teachers and coaches create positive learning environments without using physical activity as punishment. Managing and motivating children and youths require developing an effective preventive-management system; no one, simple solution works for all. Prevention is the key. The following list offers actions that are suitable alternatives to using physical activity as punishment. (*National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2009*)

- Include students in establishing expectations and outcomes early in the year, and review those expectations and outcomes frequently
- Include students in meaningful discussions about goals and how to reach them
- Be consistent with enforcing behavioral expectations within the learning environment
- Practice and reward compliance with rules and outcomes
- Offer positive feedback and catch students doing things right
- Don't reinforce negative behavior by drawing attention to it
- Hold students accountable for misbehavior
- Develop efficient routines that keep students involved in learning tasks
- Wait for students to be attentive before providing directions

Recognition Documentation

Provide a copy of the policy, a policy statement or relevant letters to school staff, parents/families or students that support that physical activity is not used or withheld as punishment for students.

OR

Clearly explain how school practices support that physical activity is not used or withheld as punishment for students.

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Resources

- [Physical Activity Used as Punishment and/or Behavior Management \(Position Statement\)](#) (National Association for Sport and Physical Education)
- [Physical Activity School and Community Guidelines](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

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712	School offers a range of competitive physical activity opportunities (intramural or interscholastic sports) for all grades before or after the school day
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Rationale

Intramural and interscholastic sports allow students to take their learning in physical education to the next level: competition. Some individuals are motivated to stay active based on the competitive aspect. These activities can help provide students with opportunities to engage in physical activity and to further develop the knowledge, attitudes, motor skills, behavioral skills and confidence needed to adopt and maintain physically active lifestyles. Intramural and interscholastic sports are most developmentally appropriate at the middle and high school levels. *(Adapted from Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Volume 46, No. RR-6)*

Action Steps

- Provide intramural or interscholastic opportunities for all students, regardless of socio-economic status
- Utilize the input of students to determine which sports and activities should be offered
- Follow your school/district's process to increase intramural/interscholastic sports, if needed
- Work with local community resources to expand their sport opportunities

Recognition Documentation

By month, identify the competitive physical activities offered, and the grades that participate in those activities.

Month	Activity	Grades Participating

Resources

- [Co-Curricular Physical Activity and Sport Programs for Middle School Students \(Position Statement\)](#) (National Association for Sport and Physical Activity)
- [Guidelines for School Intramural Programs \(Position Paper\)](#) (National Intramural Sports Council)
- [North Carolina Intramural Sports Handbook](#) (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction)

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713	School offers a range of non-competitive physical activity opportunities aimed at engaging students in fun, recreational and life-long learning opportunities before or after the school day for all grades
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Rationale

Interscholastic athletic programs are typically limited to the secondary school level and usually consist of a few highly competitive team sports. Intramural sports programs are not common but, where they are offered, usually emphasize competitive team sports. Such programs usually underserve students who are less skilled, less physically fit or not attracted to competitive sports. One reason that participation in sports declines steadily during late childhood and adolescence is that undue emphasis is placed on competition. After the needs and interests of all students are assessed, interscholastic, intramural and club programs should be modified and expanded to offer a range of competitive and noncompetitive activities. For example, noncompetitive lifetime physical activities include walking, running, martial arts, yoga, dance, strength training, group exercise, swimming and bicycling. (*Adapted from Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Volume 46, No. RR-6*)

Action Steps

- Provide non-competitive opportunities for all students, regardless of socio-economic status
- Utilize the input of students to determine which activities should be offered
- Follow your school/district's process to increase afterschool or club activities that are geared toward lifetime physical activity
- Work with local community resources to expand their lifetime physical activity opportunities

Recognition Documentation

By month, identify the non-competitive physical activities offered, and the grades that participate in those activities.

Month	Activity	Grades Participating

Resources

- [Fitness Trail Stations](#) (Alliance for a Healthier Generation)
- [Playworks Playbook](#) (Playworks)
- [GO FAR Running and Walking Program](#) (GO FAR)
 - [Discount Available](#)

714	School provides access to before and after school offerings by making transportation options available
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Rationale

Transportation appears to be the most complex and difficult of the challenges faced by school-based, before and afterschool programs. Students who require transportation in the hours before and after school are most likely the same students who would most benefit from the added support the programs offer. The lack of transportation options not only influences the hours of programming and who is able to participate but it also affects the cost of the program. Transportation is a major cost barrier for before and afterschool programs and it is a critical safety and logistical concern for families. Finding funding to support transportation services can be a challenging process. Because no dedicated revenue sources for transportation to before and afterschool initiatives exist, school administrators, community leaders and program developers need to be creative in thinking about potential funding sources and financing strategies.

Action Steps

- Identify your transportation needs
 - Before approaching funders and potential partners, be clear of your program’s transportation needs, including the number of students requiring these services, the time frame for which transportation is needed and the geographical area to be served.
- Familiarize yourself with the range of transportation resources currently available in your community.
 - Take an inventory of the transportation resources currently available in your area, including both public and private transit systems.
 - Think creatively about how existing transportation resources could be modified or expanded to serve children and youth in your program.
- Become knowledgeable about the federal, state and local transportation funds that are allocated to your community.
 - Identify which agencies and organizations fund transportation services, what services they support and how decisions about resource allocations are made.
- Remember that transportation funding is a political process.
 - Many transportation funding sources are relatively flexible, with local elected officials and appointees determining their use.
 - Identify key officials within relevant agencies and cultivate positive relationships with them.
 - Schedule meetings with decision makers to introduce them to your initiative and to explain the importance of transportation services.
- Join forces with other stakeholders.
 - Many individuals and organizations, including parents, schools, policymakers, community leaders and funders, have a stake in finding solutions to transportation problems.
 - Bring interested parties together to design and advance a transportation development project. Remember that no single person or organization is likely to be able to do the job alone.
- Take advantage of required public comment processes.
 - Under many of the U.S. Department of Transportation grant programs, applicants must provide an opportunity for public comments on proposed projects. Use these opportunities to

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gain support for transportation projects that serve children and youth from your program.

- Transportation planning requires time.
 - When working collaboratively with local and regional transportation boards, keep in mind that most transit planning is completed three years prior to its implementation.

Recognition Documentation

Describe the transportation options that are offered to students attending before and afterschool programs.

For example: We provided students with afterschool activity bussing by adding a new route, we coordinated programming with a scheduled late bus, 21st CCLC grants were used to fund transportation services for students participating in the program, we used our Head Start bus to transport our students home from our afterschool activities, we provided public transportation punch cards for students in before and afterschool activities, we coordinate bussing with a local community youth organization such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Parks & Recreation Centers, etc., we partnered with a local retirement home or church that allows us to use their activity van to provide transportation for our students afterschool, etc.

Resources

- [Financing Transportation Services to Support Out-of-School Time and Community School Initiatives](#) (The Finance Project)
- [Federal Resources to Address the Transportation Needs of Your Afterschool Program](#) (U.S. Department of Human Services)
- [Financing and Sustaining Out-Of-School Time Programs in Rural Communities: Addressing Transportation Challenges through Innovative Partnerships](#) (The Finance Project)