

School Health Policies and Programs Study 2006

Physical Education and Physical Activity

This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

Welcome to the 2006 School Health Policies and Programs Study, or SHPPS. SHPPS is a national survey conducted every six years to assess the characteristics of eight components of school health programs at the elementary through senior high school levels. It provides data to help improve school health policies and programs, nationwide.

School health programs play a unique and important role in the lives of youth. These programs can help young people improve their health-related knowledge, attitudes, and skills, and can also promote more healthy behaviors, which lead to improved health, education, and social outcomes. More specifically, schools are in a unique position to promote physical activity through physical education, recess, and other physical activity opportunities.

Being physically active reduces the risk for developing chronic diseases among adults, including heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. Regular participation in physical activity as a young person contributes to healthy bone and muscle development, reduces feelings of depression and anxiety, and promotes psychological well-being.

Young people should participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day; much of that activity could be accumulated during school hours. A comprehensive, school-based approach to promoting physical activity is to offer quality, daily physical education and other physical activity opportunities, including recess and other activity breaks, intramurals, and interscholastic sports. SHPPS 2006 data indicate that many schools are implementing these activities, but improvements are necessary.

Physical education standards guide schools in designing curricula that are age and skill appropriate. About two-thirds of all schools used standards or guidelines based on the *National Standards for Physical Education*, a guidance document outlining what students should know and be able to do as a result of quality physical education. In addition, among schools that required physical education for graduation or promotion, the percentage of schools in which students who failed physical education and had to repeat the class increased between 2000 and 2006. This demonstrates an increased importance placed on physical education. However, only 4 percent of elementary schools, 8 percent of middle schools, and 2 percent of high schools provided daily physical education for students in all grades. In addition, only about one-fourth of schools required students to develop individualized physical activity plans as part of a required course. Development of such a plan teaches a critical skill -- to be able to set goals and make decisions about personal physical activity.

Other school-based physical activity opportunities enable young people to apply knowledge, concepts, and skills learned in physical education. While nearly three-fourths of elementary schools provided regularly scheduled recess for students in kindergarten through fifth grades, only about two-thirds of middle schools and less than one-fourth of high schools had students participate in regular physical activity breaks during the school day. While most middle schools

and high schools offered student opportunities to participate in interscholastic sports, only about half offered intramural activities or physical activity clubs. Finally, less than half of schools supported or promoted walking or biking to and from school.

For additional information and resources about SHPPS, including a detailed report, school health component and topic specific fact sheets, podcasts, a state-level summaries document, questionnaires, analytic data files, technical documentation, and archives of previous SHPPS studies, visit www.cdc.gov/SHPPS.

For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.