

Physical Activity

Community of Practice

BACKGROUND

Regular moderate-to-vigorous physical activity can not only improve overall health, reduce obesity, and reduce the risk for some chronic diseases, but it also has a strong positive impact on academic achievement. This CoP currently focuses on increasing physical activity among youth ages 3 to 18. Although physical education is mandated for every student in Massachusetts public schools, there are currently no policies in place to ensure that all children have the opportunity to engage in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity during the school day. According to the 2013 Massachusetts Youth Health Survey, 23% of middle school students and 22% of high school students were overweight or obese, based on self-reported height and weight, compared to 25% and 24%, respectively, in 2011. The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommends “60 minutes or more of physical activity each day” for children. In 2013, 22% of middle school students and 20% of high school students self-reported being physically active for at least 60 minutes a day for seven days in the previous week, up from 14% and 15%, respectively, in 2011.

OBJECTIVE BY 2017

Increase the percentage of children ages 3 to 18 who report engaging in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity for 60 minutes on five or more days per week by 3%.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- Disseminate the Massachusetts Best Practice Guidelines for School-Related Physical Education and Physical Activity, a resource for helping schools, families and communities increase physical activity before, during and after the school day. The guidelines will be featured in the Mass in Motion website’s “Healthier Schools” section.
- Using social media and various other communication strategies, promote the positive link between physical activity and academic achievement to build support of parents and schools at the local level for quality physical education and physical activity programs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Physical Activity Community of Practice:

- Produced a listing of recommended links to before-, during and after-school physical activity resources for schools and youth-serving organizations, available in the “Healthier Schools” section on the Mass in Motion website (<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/community-health/mass-in-motion/school/resources/>).
- Coordinated completion of the Massachusetts Best Practice Guidelines for School-Related Physical Education and Physical Activity.

CO-FACILITATORS

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS FOR 2014-2015

Technical assistance needs include:

- Developing and implementing social media strategies to promote the relationship between physical activity and learning.
- Developing a dissemination plan to distribute the Massachusetts Best Practice Guidelines for School-Related Physical Education and Physical Activity to a wide audience.

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