

Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program Improving Student Academic Achievement and Behavior

The Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP, pronounced “C-SPAP”) represents an all-inclusive approach by which school districts and schools provide all possible opportunities for students to engage in school-related physical activity (PA). The purpose is to support student participation in at least 60 minutes of PA each day – which includes PA performed outside of school time - as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CSPAP was created by the Society for Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) America, with support from CDC.

School-Related PA Benefits for Students and Staff

Sufficient PA during the school day can enhance academic performance and improve student behavior.¹ A recent Institute of Medicine report supports these findings and suggests a relationship between vigorous or moderate intensity PA with improved brain function. Children who are more active manifest a greater attention span, exhibit a faster cognitive processing speed, and perform better on standardized academic tests than children who are less active.²

School boards, school administrators, and principals can feel confident that maintaining or increasing time dedicated to PA during the school day will likely improve student academic achievement. PA opportunities can be integrated into school time through various means without detracting from instructional requirements and objectives.

CSPAP’s Five Core Components

- 1) Physical Education (PE): PE is the foundation of CSPAP. If possible, PE should be taught daily by a PE specialist who uses the appropriate grade(s)-specific curriculum that meets federal and state standards. (When a PE specialist is not available, another staff person may serve as the PE lead.) Proper equipment and facilities should be provided for PE class and fifty percent of classroom time should be devoted to student participation in moderate to vigorous PA. School staff should never employ PA as a punishment for students, and PE teachers should modify class period activities, as necessary, to accommodate students with disabilities. Overall, students should develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to adopt and maintain a physically-active lifestyle throughout their lifetime. Staff who serve as PE teachers should receive annual professional development training to support and increase their skills. PE exemptions should be kept to a minimum.

- 2) PA at School (Beyond PE): During the school day, school staff is encouraged to provide as many opportunities as possible for students to engage in PA. In

elementary schools, total recess time should last for at least 20 minutes. There should also be sufficient exercise equipment available to accommodate all students who want to use them. During recess, staff should provide structured activity and encourage students to participate in either organized or informal play. Schools should consider providing a recess budget for equipment and supplies. Finally, recess should not be withheld for disciplinary reasons.

For grades 1 through 12, PA can be integrated into the curriculum (lesson plans) for academic subjects including math, English language arts, and science. This approach can include simple actions such as requiring students to stand up when they either ask or answer a question in class. Also, a one-to-three-minute activity break may be integrated into each class period, such as use of a JAMmin' Minute (five easy exercises students and teachers can perform). Student participation in short bouts of physical activity will improve their brain function and help them behave more appropriately once they have sat down.

- 3) PA Before and After School: PA during these time frames includes active transportation to and from school. This equates to walking and biking to school in conjunction with establishing safe routes to school (emphasis on physical safety and violence avoidance). Structured and informal PA opportunities made available on school property, beyond the standard school day, fit into this category. Examples include student activity clubs, intramural sports, field days, access to adjoining recreation land made available through joint use agreements, and active video games. In some cases, schools may negotiate arrangements with community centers or other organizations (e.g., boys and girls clubs) to provide physical activity opportunities for students, after school.
- 4) Staff Involvement: This component includes implementation of employee wellness programs that often feature walking clubs, and may also include PA education, group fitness classes, and medical screenings. Employee meetings may incorporate PA breaks (standing, stretching, etc.). School staff who participate in these endeavors are more likely to serve as volunteers to help plan, implement, and evaluate student wellness activities.
- 5) Family and Community Engagement: School staff can send PA informational materials home to parents that promote and detail how families can participate in PA, together. Schools may also conduct onsite PA events where families are encouraged to participate. Parents may be requested to serve as volunteers to help direct school-based PA events. School staff can identify or negotiate with community organizations to provide offsite PA programs for families.

CSPAP Resource

CSPAP: A Guide for Schools (Guide) is an excellent resource for understanding CSPAP, in depth. This 70-page no-cost Guide, downloadable at the above link, provides a comprehensive overview of CSPAP and describes in detail the step-by-step strategies to develop, implement, and evaluate CSPAP. The CDC released this document in 2013. The Guide includes a number of templates and checklists to assist individuals in working with CSPAP. (For individuals viewing this page in paper form, Google *Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: A Guide for Schools* to access the Guide.)

The CSPAP Process

Following is an abbreviated description of the seven steps for successfully integrating CSPAP into a school. See *CSPAP: A Guide for Schools*, pages 17 through 49, for a comprehensive explanation that details the CSPAP process.

1) Establish a Team or Committee: When possible, a PE teacher or a PE leader should serve as chairperson for the CSPAP team, which may operate as a freestanding entity or function as a subcommittee within an already existing school health council. The CSPAP team should meet regularly, have administrative and budgetary support, and link with the community to acquire personnel and material assistance for implementing CSPAP.

2) Conduct a Needs Assessment: Identify existing policies, programs, and practices that will assist the CSPAP team in developing operational goals, objectives, and activities. Also determine to what degree the various CSPAP elements are already in operation.

3) Create a Vision, Goals, and Objectives. This step builds on the results of the previous needs assessment. A vision describes the overall purpose or implications of CSPAP implementation. Goals, in this context, express the desired long-term results and focus of CSPAP. Objectives state specific actions that students, staff, or others will perform. Following is an example of each of these elements:

A) Vision: “Active Students, Active School.”

B) Goal: “Increase the number of students who participate in 60 minutes of daily PA.”

C) Objective: “By (date), 90% of students will use a daily log to record the number of minutes they participate in moderate to vigorous physical activity.”

4) Identify Intended Outcomes: Determine what changes you want to occur regarding student, staff, or parental knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors, along with school

environmental adjustments, etc. Identify, for each parameter, what indicators you will use to monitor progress over time. For example, a survey implemented twice, 12 months apart, could be used to ascertain changes in student knowledge and attitudes.

5) Develop a CSPAP Plan: The written CSPAP plan should incorporate and build on the vision, goals, objectives, and intended outcomes identified in the previous two steps. The plan should present a time-sequenced list of tasks that that school staff and others will perform to strengthen PE classes (if necessary) and build toward providing more opportunities and promptings for students to participate in PA. The plan, among other factors, will specify who will do what, by when in light of the available budget and other resources. The plan should also include communication and marketing strategies. See the Guide which provides much more detail and includes forms to assist in CSPAP plan development.

6) Implement the CSPAP Plan: Follow the steps included in the plan. The plan essentially serves as an activity checklist for the CSPAP team or committee.

7) Evaluate the CSPAP Plan. Evaluating the CSPAP plan serves many purposes. It provides feedback regarding how well your school has reached its stated goals. Evaluation provides insights as to which strategies are effective versus those strategies that are found to be unproductive. Program assessment helps inform future program development and improvement. Evaluation results may also justify CSPAP continuation and provide input for completing funding applications. Data collection serves as a core component for CSPAP evaluation and should be driven by the progress indicators described in step four, above.

CSPAP Contact

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¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The association between school-based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010.

²Educating the Student Body: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School, Institute of Medicine Report, May 23, 2013. Accessed June 18, 2015: <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2013/Educating-the-Student-Body-Taking-Physical-Activity-and-Physical-Education-to-School.aspx>.

