Physical Activity
Active Bodies = Active Brains

Students who are physically active tend to have better grades, school attendance, cognitive performance and classroom behaviors.\textsuperscript{i} Children should be physically active for at least 60 minutes a day, though about half of U.S. children do not meet this standard for optimal health and learning.\textsuperscript{ii} In an increasingly busy world, schools play a critical role in ensuring children are physically active by providing structured (physical education) and unstructured play opportunities (recess and in-class brain breaks).

The Case for Healthy, Active Schools
- Higher physical activity and fitness levels are associated with improved concentration and memory among students.\textsuperscript{iii}
- More participation in physical education class has been associated with better grades, standardized test scores and classroom behavior.\textsuperscript{iv}
- Time spent in recess has been shown to positively affect students' cognitive performance and classroom behaviors.\textsuperscript{v}
- Brief classroom physical activity breaks are associated with improved standardized test scores in reading and math.\textsuperscript{vi}

Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs (CSPAP)
A Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) is a multi-component approach by which school districts and schools use all opportunities for students to be physically active, meet the nationally-recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day, and develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be physically active for a lifetime.

1 in 5 children nationally get 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

“I call exercise Miracle Grow for the brain. It keeps brain cells healthy in a way that even playing chess does not.”

– Dr. John J. Ratey, Co-Author of Spark - The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain
Physical Education vs. Physical Activity
Physical education is a core academic subject, which provides students with the knowledge and skills needed to establish and maintain lifetime fitness. Physical activity is any bodily movement that results in energy expenditure (e.g. walking or taking the stairs).

What you can do
• Advocate for more high-quality physical education
• Implement a comprehensive school physical activity program into school wellness policy
• Ensure that at least 20 minutes of daily recess is provided in elementary school
• Do not withhold recess as punishment
• Provide active indoor recess activities during inclement weather
• Incorporate purposeful movement into classroom instruction
• Recruit school wellness council members and parent volunteers to lead before and after school physical activities, such as a running club or Walking School Bus
• Provide training and resources to teachers for incorporating classroom physical activity breaks
• Invite parents to attend fitness activities and reinforce healthy habits at home
• Offer nonfood rewards such as extra recess or a classroom dance party

Resources
Brain Blasters
Cosmic Yoga
Game On- Action for Healthy Kids
Go Noodle
PE and Health: NE Fact Sheet
Safe Routes to School
Shape of the Nation report- SHAPE America

“”My son loves to run and looks forward to running club before school. He is now hurrying me up to get him to school early instead of me hurrying him up!””

– Parent, St. Margaret Mary School

Check out Live Well Omaha Kids’ School Wellness Resource Guide for additional community resources to support your comprehensive school physical activity program.