

BEST PRACTICES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AT SCHOOL

- Assure that all new teachers are aware of the Health Active Children policy and provided necessary resources to be in compliance.

Why? There is research showing a connection between physical activity and academic performance. Physical activity has been linked to decreased discipline referrals, increased attendance, reduced stress and improved academic performance. According to our Whole Faculty Study Group survey of K-5 teachers, one-third of teachers were not aware of the HAC requirement.

- Observe classes to ensure the use of Energizers in the classroom.

Why? These physical activities are aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study ensuring that students are receiving the required coursework and meeting the requirement for physical activity as outlined in the Healthy Active Children policy.

- Assign different activity sites at recess rotated through all classes at each grade level - For example, each day of the week a class would be at a different activity site such as the kickball field, on playground equipment, on the walking trail, doing calisthenics, etc.

Why? Everyone gets bored with the same activity. Mix it up. By having a set schedule, students know what activity they will participate in each day. By switching up activities, students use different muscle groups. Some students prefer solitary activities such as walking while others prefer competitive activities.

- Provide activities for students who have not completed their work or for those students who are not allowed to participate with other classmates.

Why? The Healthy Active Children Policy states that “structured/unstructured recess and other physical activity shall not be taken away from students as a form of punishment. In addition, severe and inappropriate exercise may no be used as a form of punishment for students.” Rather than withholding physical activity from students who have had not followed class rules, have these students participate in calisthenics or other solitary activities separated from the class.

- Recommend to after school day care coordinators that physical activities be scheduled immediately after school prior to other activities.

Why? Students have been sitting at their desks the majority of the day. They need the opportunity to release all of their penned up energy before doing their homework. The result is less discipline issues.

- Recommend that teachers participate with students in physical activities.

Why? Ever hear of the adage “Do as I say, not as I do”? There is no better message to send to students than “I value my health and I hope you will too”. Teachers who are role models to students are more respected and have fewer discipline problems. Teachers can even gain the benefit of reduced stress by exercising at work.

- Work towards making sure that playground equipment meets the daycare guidelines.

Why? All school playgrounds in Franklin County except the one at Bunn Elementary School fail to meet North Carolina Commission on Playground Rules requirements. That means that all students who attend after school programs are banned from using the playground equipment. It is difficult for children (and adults too) to understand why they can play on the equipment during the school day but not after school. We need to maximize the resources that we have.

- Ask physical education teachers to provide staff development to classroom teachers focused on the use of equipment and activities that require little or no equipment

Why? Classroom teachers are often times at a loss as to what activities can be provided in the classroom on rainy days or when there is no equipment available. Physical education teachers can provide a fun-filled staff development opportunity to teachers so they can use a variety of activities to get students up and moving. Integrating physical activity into the school day should be a team effort.

- Schedule physical activities before school to set the tone for the day.

Why? At Long Mill Elementary School, students are invited to come to the gym prior to the start of class to participate in physical activities of their choosing. Students may choose to dance, play basketball, walk around the court, etc. Students tend to be more focused and calm after expending energy. Research shows that students who are given opportunities to participate in these types of activities have less discipline issues, increased time on task, increased attendance, reduced stress and improved academic performance.

- Assure that all physically handicapped children receive some type of physical activity.

Why? Student who are physically challenged need opportunities to benefit from being physically active like other students. Students should not be allowed to “opt out”. Consult with the physical education teacher to modify any physical activity to the needs of the student. For example, a wheel-bound student can’t jump rope but they can imitate the movement by swinging an imaginary rope.