

Cover Photo: Soccer players in Austria. September 2009.  
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Reference: *Solving the problem of childhood obesity within a generation* (White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity Report to the President, May, 2010).  
Retrieved October 12, 2010 from  
<http://www.letsmove.gov/obesitytaskforce.php>



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Talking Points for Kids™

# Physical Exercise



Written by **Elfrieda H. Hiebert**

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## PHYSICAL EXERCISE

There are many ways to get physical exercise. You might be running after some of your friends in a local park or on the school ground. You might be playing soccer or other sports. Perhaps you like to go for long walks with your family’s pet dog. Each of these is an example of physical exercise.

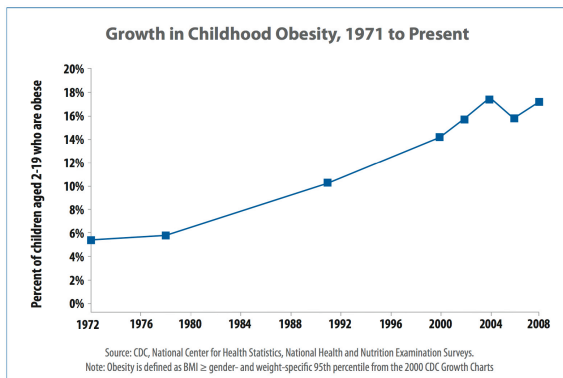
Everyone—educational leaders and community leaders in your city and also in Washington, DC—thinks that children and young people should be getting more physical exercise. The articles in this *Talking Points for Kids* deal with ideas on how students can get more exercise—in school and outside of school. Or perhaps a little of both?

## What Scientists Say About: Physical Exercise and Education

Scientists recommend 20-30 minutes of moderate exercise every day for growing children. However, only 1 out of every 10 schools has PE every day.

In a recent study, it was found that 4 out of 25 children aged 6 to 19 were overweight. And, another 8 children were at risk of being overweight. In a class of 25 students, that's almost half the class!

The graph (below) shows that the percent of young Americans who are overweight has more than doubled over the last 30 years. More exercise, including PE in schools could help slow this alarming trend.



However, the purpose of PE is not just to provide exercise so students don't get overweight. Scientists have shown that regular exercise can help improve student's attention span, memory, and learning. In California, kids who were physically fit scored twice as well on tests as kids who were unfit. Exercise by itself won't make you smarter, but it gets you ready to learn.



Photo: Children running a race in Pearl Harbor, HI. May, 2010  
Taken by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Mark Logico. Released into public domain by United States Navy.

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## What Some People Say About: Physical Education

### Pacifica Examiner: Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at North Shore Elementary. Every week on Friday we have a PE class. I used to hate PE classes. We used to just play games like football and basketball. I am not very good at them. Now we do exercises and play other sports. We run relays and play tennis. Our PE teacher, Mr. Kroger, says these skills will last us a lifetime.

Now our principal, Ms. Blair, says that our school is going to get rid of PE class because our test scores are so low. She also said that we are getting enough exercise after school and at recess, and that we don't need PE class. I am not very good at soccer and basketball, and so I am not signed up for after-school sports. PE class is one of the only times that I

get to run around and have fun. I think it is important to have a time during school where we learn about exercise, just like we learn about math and science. Please don't get rid of our PE class!

Sincerely,  
Gregory Diller



Photo: Children from the Kadena Children's Center jumping rope. Okinawa, Japan. February, 2010  
Taken by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Meagan E. Klein. Released into Public Domain by the United States Navy.

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## New Pacifica Daily: Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Have you seen the end-of-year test scores for our city's schools? Only forty percent of the students passed the test! I just can't believe it.

I think more time should be spent on learning and less time should be spent on things that don't help raise these test scores. If it means cutting art, music, or PE, then I'm all for it. Schools don't have a lot of money these days and focusing on the wrong things can really hurt the students.

Besides, many students do sports or they take music lessons after school. Our children need to focus on the basics; math, reading and writing. These are the things that our children need all their lives; not the rules of kickball or how to play a drum.

Sincerely,  
Steve Fletcher



## What *Some People* in Other Countries Say About: Physical Exercise

When the school day is done, there are many students who don't head home. Instead, they play sports, such as soccer and basketball. Other children have classes in karate, ballet, or swimming. For many students, this is how they get the recommended amount of exercise.

Scientists in Spain found that after-school activity helped kids with their weight and fitness levels. However, not everyone signs up for after-school activities. In some cities, it is very difficult to attend after-school sports.

Other people have suggested that schools encourage kids to walk or bike to school and back. This is a great way to get exercise. However, in some areas of the country, it is just too dangerous to walk or bike to school every day. Also, in the northern part of the country, it is too cold during the winter months to walk or bike to school.



## What Some Students Say About: Physical Education

### Kids' Spotlight: Katy Jansen

At the end of the school day, Katy's day is just beginning. Every day after school she rides her bike to WaterFun Sports Park and practices with her swim team. She has been doing very well in freestyle and backstroke, and expects to do well this year in the city invitational swim meet. Usually, practice lasts until 6 p.m. She goes home, eats dinner with her family, and starts her homework around 8 p.m. By 10 or 10:30 she is done, and ready for bed. At 6 in the morning she is up and ready for another day.

On the weekends, Katy often has a swim meet. Her mom usually takes her, and sometimes it is quite a long way to drive. Her friend, Allison, used to be on the team with her. However, WaterFun Sports swim team is expensive, and Allison couldn't afford it. Katy looks forward to her swim meets. She also likes that her Mom treats her to nice lunches afterwards. Katy feels lucky to be on the team during the winter. Even though it will be cold outside, the sports park has indoor heated pools, and she will be able to swim all winter long.

Katy loves swimming and learning in school. She wants to do well in both. But some days are easier than others. With both school and swim practice, Katy is often tired and has to use her lunch time to either catch up on her schoolwork or rest by taking a nap.



**What do you think?**

How much time do you spend exercising each day?

What activities are you doing for exercise?

Do you spend more time exercising in school or out of school?

How do you feel on days you don't exercise? How do you feel on days you do exercise?

What are some ways to encourage students to exercise more?

Do you think schools should have more PE time so that more students can exercise?

Should schools have more time for exercise?

Yes, I think schools should have more time for exercise because...	No, I don't think schools should have more time for exercise because...