

Creating Movers as Successful Learners

Western Suffolk BOCES

Physical Activity is a Priority at Southampton Public Schools

Southampton Public Schools support students to be successful by increasing physical activity during the school day. Studies show that active children learn better. Students who are active are more focused, have faster cognitive processing, and more successful memory retention. Yet most kids sit still for more than half the day in the school setting and on average another 6 hours in front of a screen! This sedentary lifestyle harms kids' chances to thrive in school, and also impacts their overall health. Inactivity contributes to chronic disease such as diabetes and heart disease, and increased stress. Thus in the last two years Southampton Public Schools has taken a comprehensive approach to increasing physical activity throughout the school day to support students to be successful and healthy.

A new wellness policy has made daily physical activity the norm.

The District Health and Wellness Committee, with the support of the Superintendent and the Board of Education, revised the wellness policy to include goals that endorse providing opportunities for students to be physically active throughout the school day so they can achieve 60 minutes of daily physical activity. To strengthen this initiative, the district established a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) a priority of Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a New York State Department of Health funded initiative which aims to create school environments that support healthy behaviors such as physical activity and movement. The District also added policy elements that prohibit withholding physical activity specifically recess as punishment and to encourage physical activity as a reward.

Southampton staff show commitment to healthy students. Southampton staff participated in a Shape America Physical Activity Leader training through a collaboration with Adelphi University. After the training the staff assessed the physical activity landscape and developed goals to increase physical activity yearly. They communicated their vision and the link between healthy active learners and student achievement in a variety of settings including community forums, faculty, Board of Education and PTO meetings and the reform took off. The excitement of staff for this initiative has contributed to a culture that prioritizes student wellness.

Success Snapshot



Southampton revised their wellness policy in 2017 to show support for active learning.



Creating Healthy Schools and Communities



SOUTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Anchoring the Community

Students are getting more physical activity during the school day, starting with quality physical education (PE).

Quality PE is the cornerstone of a successful initiative to increase physical activity for students. The District hired an additional Physical Education teacher and committed to increasing PE class time. PE classes in grades K-4 went to a six day cycle rotating between traditional PE in the gymnasium, instruction and practice in mindfulness and yoga and instruction in functional content in Health and PE. Students are now not only participating in PE daily, they are meeting the required daily minutes for PE for elementary students, and are meeting the national goal of 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

"I really like the mindfulness class because I usually do it when I'm having anxiety, sometimes I do it before to make sure I don't have anxiety, it really helps me and I love it." - David, 3rd grade

The District Health and Wellness committee was passionate about increasing physical activity during the school day through brain breaks in the classroom.

The District funded Go Noodle Plus, a web-based program that gets kids moving through short interactive activities. PE staff modeled the Go Noodle program at faculty meetings and encouraged staff to implement classroom physical activity breaks. As an

"Every day PE makes me feel much stronger and gives me more energy."
- Kaela, 2nd grade

incentive, staff held a competition to see which classroom could earn the most Go Noodle minutes. The winning class received a fruit "cake" made out of a watermelon, tee shirts and a trophy.

Southampton used grant funding from Yoga Foster and Fuel Up to Play 60 to support these initiatives, by purchasing tee shirts, trophies, mindfulness bells and yoga mats, and supporting staff professional development in mindfulness and yoga.

Looking forward, Southampton hopes to promote staff wellness and further engage families and the community in getting active.

In addition, continued learning will further physical activity opportunities. Staff from Southampton, along with staff from four other schools districts, will participate in a Community of Practice facilitated by Adelphi University. Participants meet with other physical activity leaders to pool their experiences including sharing their successes and barriers in providing more physical activity in their individual school districts. Together, school staff, students, parents, and community members will continue to work together to ensure students in Southampton can be successful and healthy.

"Mindfulness makes me feel more calm and less stressed out because usually I stress out if I'm late or lose something and I use what I learned in class to relax more." - Julia, 3rd grade



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"I like the things we do every day, exercising, learning to behave more from mindfulness and team building." - Luciana