The Movement Disparity:

Parent and Principal Perspectives on Physical Activity in Schools | Spring 2019





National parent and principal surveys conducted for Active Schools by NORC at the University of Chicago

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CONTRIBUTORS

Charlene Burgeson, Active Schools, Action for Healthy Kids

Jillian Papa, Action for Healthy Kids

Shannon Michael, CDC, Division of Population Health, School Health Branch

Cassandra Boyd, Action for Healthy Kids

Claire Jensen, Active Schools, Action for Healthy Kids

Active Schools. (2019). The movement disparity: Parent and principal perspectives on physical activity in schools. Chicago, IL: Action for Healthy Kids.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Background	4
Methodology	4
Definitions	6
Findings	7
Parents' Perspectives About Active Schools	
Conclusion	23
References	23

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 years should do 60 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily¹, yet national data shows that many fall short of this guideline.

Active Schools is a national collective impact movement dedicated to helping K-12 schools in the U.S. provide students with equitable access to 60 minutes or more of physical activity and play every day. Active Schools' vision is to reimagine school environments that provide opportunities for academic, social, emotional *and* physical learning so that all children have the ability, confidence and desire to lead active, healthy lives. Active Schools recognizes the critical roles that parents and principals play in prioritizing and providing an active school.

Active Schools conducted two nationally representative surveys—one with U.S. parents and another with U.S. K-12 school principals. The surveys were developed and funded by Active Schools and its home organization, Action for Healthy Kids. They were administered and analyzed by NORC at the University of Chicago. Both surveys were English language, web-based and included respondents from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In total, 1,015 parents of school-aged children completed the Parent Survey and 1,019 principals completed the Principal Survey.

The survey results show that while most parents and principals have positive attitudes about the importance and benefits of physical activity at school, their behaviors do not always reflect those beliefs.

Among the key findings:

- A high percentage of respondents on both surveys, 81 percent of parents and 93 percent of principals, believe that children and adolescents who are physically active are better learners.
- Most principals (83 percent) believe schools should have the same responsibility for students'
 physical, academic and social and emotional learning, but only half (50 percent) said their schools
 equally address all three. Similarly, 87 percent of parents believe schools should have the same
 responsibility for these three types of learning.
- Over half of parents (54 percent) and principals (53 percent) said that it is extremely or very
 important that their school is an active school. Based on the definition of an active school
 provided in the survey, 60 percent of parents and 47 percent of principals said their school is an
 active school.
- While a majority of parents (54 percent) said that it is extremely or very important that their child's school is an active school, only 39 percent reported communicating with their child's principal about it. Principals provided a different account with only 12 percent reporting that parents communicated with them about physical activity programs during the past school year.

- Forty-eight percent of parents and 62 percent of principals said that it is extremely or very important for their school to provide physical activity in the classroom. Eight-nine percent of principals said that at least some classroom teachers at their school integrate physical activity into their classrooms as part of academic lessons and/or by providing physical activity breaks. However, 41 percent said that less than half do, and 10 percent said that none do.
- Principals are influenced to provide physical education and physical activity programs for a variety
 of health and academic reasons. The two most common influential outcomes are overall health (81
 percent) and students' engagement in academic learning (77 percent).

BACKGROUND

The *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* recommend that children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 years should do 60 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily1, yet national data shows that many fall short of this guideline.

Active Schools is a national collective impact movement dedicated to helping K-12 schools in the U.S. provide students with equitable access to 60 minutes or more of physical activity and play every day. Active Schools' vision is to reimagine school environments that provide opportunities for academic, social, emotional and physical learning so that all children have the ability, confidence and desire to lead active, healthy lives. Active Schools recognizes the critical roles that parents and principals play in prioritizing and providing an active school. To inform efforts to increase active school environments nationwide, Active Schools conducted a national Parent Survey and national Principal Survey.

METHODOLOGY

The surveys were developed and funded by Active Schools and its home organization, Action for Healthy Kids. They were administered and analyzed by NORC at the University of Chicago. Both surveys were English language, web-based and included respondents from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Parent Survey

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak® Panel, a probability-based panel developed by NORC to be representative of the U.S. household population. The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97 percent of the U.S. household population. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak and screened for eligibility. Parents were considered eligible for the survey if they were a parent or legal guardian of one or more children enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade. If a parent reported having more than one school-age child, the web system randomly selected one child for which the parent should respond to the survey questions. In total, 1,015 parents completed the survey which was 28.2 percent of the AmeriSpeak panelists invited to complete it.

Weighting variables were obtained from the 2018 Current Population Survey to enable the data to be reflective of the U.S. population of parents of children enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Principal Survey

A list of principals was provided by a third-party vendor, MDR, a division of Dun & Bradstreet. The list included all principals of U.S. schools with grades ranging from kindergarten through 12th grade who have an email address. Only those who reported being a current principal, assistant principal, or vice

4

principal were eligible for the survey. Those who completed the survey received a \$10 virtual gift card for their participation. In total, 84,796 principals were invited to take the survey and 1,019 principals completed it for a response rate of 1.2 percent. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents identified as a principal while 1 percent identified as an assistant or vice principal.

The demographics of the respondents closely matched to the known population statistics for principals of U.S. schools so no weighting adjustments were made.

Data Analysis

For both surveys, descriptive data analyses were conducted using STATA (version 15), which allows for adjustment of standard errors for complex sample designs. Crosstabulations of each question and grade levels (elementary, middle and high school) were conducted and differences across subgroups are reported only when at the 95 percent level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5 percent or less probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling.

There are two key limitations with these surveys. First, survey findings should be interpreted for descriptive purposes only because respondents to the Parent Survey and the Principal Survey were not associated with the same schools. Second, the response rate for the Principal Survey was low. While principals that responded to the survey reflected the national demographic of principals, the findings may not be representative of all principals.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions were provided in the Parent Survey and Principal Survey related to one or more survey questions.

Better learners are children and adolescents who are more attentive and engaged in class and perform better on tests.

Physical learning includes the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be physically active, which is learned and practiced through physical education and other physical activity programs/opportunities.

Academic learning includes the content for subjects such as language arts, math and science.

Social and emotional learning includes the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

An **active school** is a school that provides students with opportunities to be physically active before, during and after the school day. These physical activity opportunities include physical education, recess, classroom physical activity, before and after school physical activity programs such as physical activity clubs and intramurals, alternatives to traditional classroom seating such as standing desks, pedal desks and balance balls, movement labs/rooms, ability to walk and/or bike safely to and from school, and similar.

The following definition was provided only in the Principal Survey related to two survey questions.

A **school physical activity leader** is an individual who serves as a catalyst and coordinator for before, during, and after school physical activity programs/opportunities other than interscholastic sports. The physical activity leader does not facilitate all programs/opportunities, rather, they are facilitated by a variety of individuals such as school staff, parents and community members.

FINDINGS

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES ABOUT ACTIVE SCHOOLS

Most Parents and Principals Support the Concept of an Active School

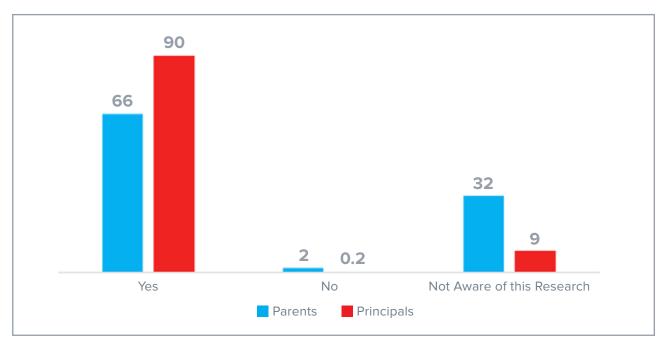
A high percentage of respondents on both surveys, 81 percent of parents and 93 percent of principals, believe that children and adolescents who are physically active are better learners.

As shown in Figure 1, two-thirds of parents (66 percent) believe the research that shows that physical activity can help children and adolescents be better learners, while 2 percent said they do not believe this type of research. Thirty-two percent of parents said they were not aware of this type of research.

Principals were more familiar with this type of research. Ninety percent said they believe this research, less than 1 percent do not, and 9 percent said they were not aware of it.



FIGURE 1: PARENTS AND PRINCIPALS WHO BELIEVE THE RESEARCH THAT SHOWS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CAN HELP CHILDREN BE BETTER LEARNERS (%)



Most parents and principals believe that physical learning is as important as academic learning and social and emotional learning. When asked if schools should have the same responsibility for physical, academic, and social and emotional learning, 87 percent of parents and 83 percent of principals said that all three are equally important. However, among those who believe that all three are not equally important, 82 percent of parents and 84 percent of principals said academics should be prioritized over physical learning and social and emotional learning.

Half of principals (50 percent) said they believe that their school equally addresses these three types of learning. Elementary school principals (52 percent) were more likely than high school principals (41 percent) to believe that their school equally addresses all three.

While Most Parents and Principals Believe Their School is an Active School, Few Recognize the Term

The concept of an active school was unfamiliar to most parents and principals. Fewer than half of parents (42 percent) and principals (45 percent) said they were aware of what an active school is before being given the definition in the survey. Even fewer had used the term "active school" themselves. Only 9 percent of parents and 7 percent of principals said they had used the term.

After being given the definition, 60 percent of parents reported that their child's school is an active school. Fewer principals, however, described their school as an active school; only 47 percent said the school they manage is an active school.

For both parents and principals, there are differences by school level. Sixty-eight percent of parents with a child in elementary school reported that their child attends an active school compared with 57 percent of parents with a child in middle school and 52 percent of parents with a child in high school. Fifty-one percent of elementary school principals reported that their school is an active school compared with 38 percent of middle school principals and 38 percent of high school principals.

Access to Physical Education is Very Important to Parents, While They Place Less Importance on Other Aspects of an Active School

After being given the definition of an active school, 54 percent of parents reported that it is extremely or very important that their child's school is an active school – similar to principals at 53 percent.

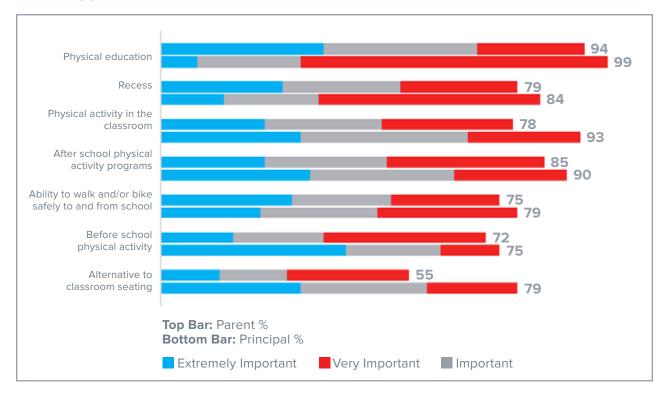
For both parents and principals, there were differences by school level. Parents with a child in elementary school were more likely than parents with a child in high school to report that it is extremely or very important that their child's school is an active school (61 percent v. 45 percent). Fifty-eight percent of elementary school principals said it is extremely or very important that their school is an active school compared with 47 percent of middle school principals and 47 percent of high school principals.

When asked about specific aspects of what constitutes an active school, 70 percent of parents reported that it is extremely or very important for their child to have access to physical education. However, 91 percent of principals reported the same, revealing a 21-point difference in attitudes between parents and principals. Differences between principals and parents also were seen with alternatives to traditional classroom seating such as standing desks, pedal desks and balance balls: 48 percent of principals reported that this is extremely or very important, while just 28 percent of parents reported the same.

When the response of "important" was combined with extremely or very important, an even higher percentage of parents and principals said that various aspects of an active school are important, as shown in Figure 2.



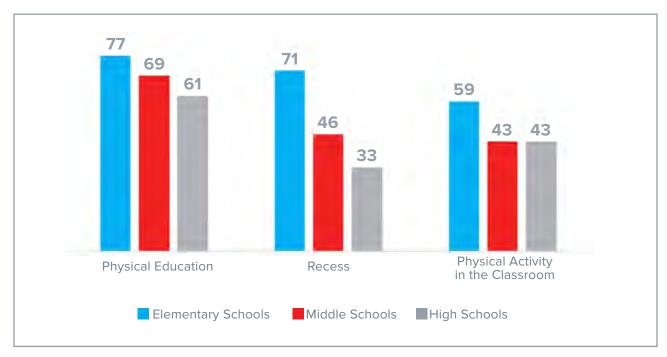
FIGURE 2: IMPORTANCE OF CHILD'S ACCESS TO ASPECTS OF AN ACTIVE SCHOOL AMONG PARENTS AND PRINCIPALS (%)



Forty-seven percent of parents of middle and high school students and 44 percent of middle and high school principals said that it is extremely or very important to have time in the school schedule on some or all days of the week for students to participate in their choice of physical activity such as fitness, sport, dance, yoga or similar.

Parents of elementary students (77 percent) were more likely than parents of high school students (61 percent) to say it is extremely or very important that their child has access to physical education class. Parents of elementary students were more likely than parents of middle and high school students to say that the following aspects of an active school are extremely or very important: recess (71 percent v. 46 percent and 33 percent, respectively) and physical activity in the classroom (59 percent v. 43 percent and 43 percent, respectively), as shown in Figure 3.

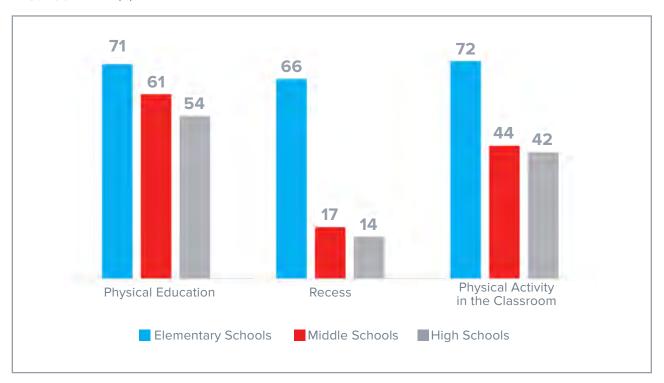
FIGURE 3: PARENT-REPORTED IMPORTANCE (EXTREMELY OR VERY) OF THREE ASPECTS OF AN ACTIVE SCHOOL, BY SCHOOL LEVEL (%)



Principals of elementary schools were more likely than principals of middle and high schools to report that the following aspects of an active school are extremely or very important: physical education (95 percent v. 88 percent and 81 percent, respectively), recess (89 percent v. 36 percent and 30 percent, respectively) and physical activity in the classroom (72 percent v. 44 percent and 42 percent, respectively) as shown in Figure 4.



FIGURE 4: PRINCIPAL-REPORTED IMPORTANCE (EXTREMELY OR VERY) OF THREE ASPECTS OF AN ACTIVE SCHOOL, BY SCHOOL LEVEL (%)



Principals of elementary schools were more likely than principals of middle and high schools to report that alternatives to traditional classroom seating are extremely or very important (55 percent v. 45 percent and 34 percent, respectively).

Principals of middle and high schools were more likely than principals of elementary schools to say that after school physical activity programs are extremely or very important (66 percent and 67 percent v. 53 percent).

PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES ABOUT ACTIVE SCHOOLS

Principals Say Their Schools Provide Some Aspects of an Active School

While only 47 percent of principals classified the school they manage as an active school, many said that multiple aspects of an active school are present in their schools.

Physical education classes are nearly universal, as 98 percent of principals reported that their school offers them. Other commonly provided aspects of an active school as reported by principals are: recess (77 percent), physical activity in the classroom (69 percent), the ability to walk or bike safely to and from school (69 percent), after school physical activity programs (59 percent), and alternatives to traditional classroom seating (55 percent). Only about a quarter of principals (28 percent) said their schools offer before school physical activity programs.

Forty percent of middle and high school principals reported that time in the school schedule on some or all days of the week for students to participate in their choice of physical activity such as fitness, sport, dance, yoga, or similar is provided at their school.

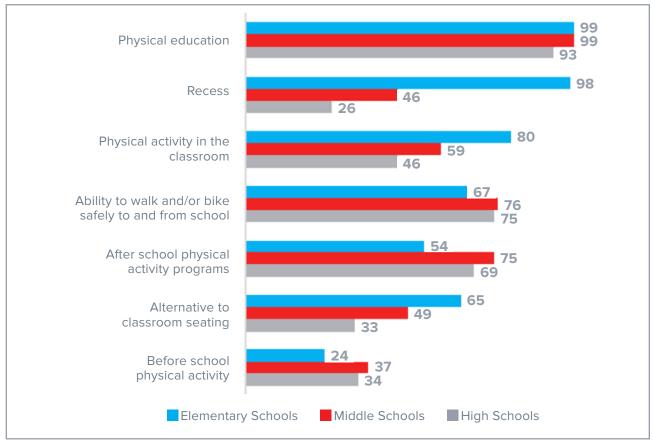
There were clear differences in responses by principals at different school levels, as shown in Figure 5. Elementary school principals were more likely than middle and high school principals, and middle school principals were more likely than high school principals, to say that their school offers recess (98 percent v. 46 percent v. 26 percent, respectively), physical activity in the classroom (80 percent v. 59 percent v. 46 percent, respectively), and alternatives to traditional classroom seating (65 percent v. 49 percent v. 33 percent, respectively).

Middle and high school principals were more likely than elementary school principals to say that their school offers the ability to walk or bike safely to and from school (76 percent and 75 percent v. 67 percent, respectively), and after school physical activity programs (75 percent and 69 percent v. 54 percent, respectively).

More elementary and middle school principals reported that their school offers physical education (99 percent and 99 percent, respectively) than high school principals (93 percent).

Offering before school physical activity programs was more commonly reported by high school principals (34 percent) than elementary school principals (24 percent).

FIGURE 5: PRINCIPAL-REPORTED PROVISION OF VARIOUS ASPECTS OF AN ACTIVE SCHOOL, BY SCHOOL LEVEL (%)

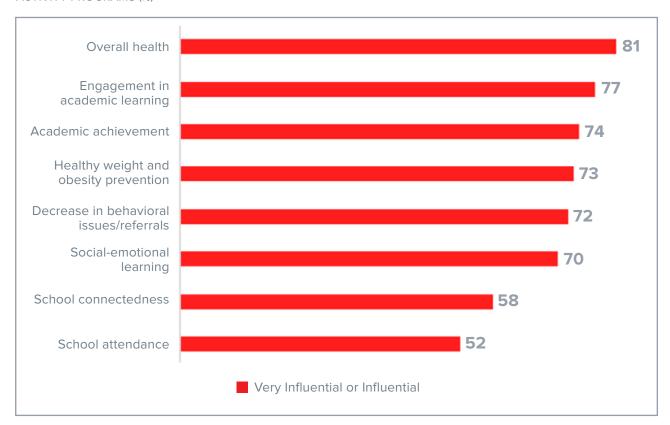


A Variety of Student Outcomes Motivate Principals to Provide Physical Education and Physical Activity

As shown in Figure 6, principals are influenced to provide physical activity opportunities for a variety of health and academic reasons. More than three-quarters of principals report that their decision to provide physical education and physical activity opportunities is guided by overall health outcomes (81 percent) and students' engagement in academic learning (77 percent).



FIGURE 6: PRINCIPAL-REPORTED INFLUENCES ON THE PROVISION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS (%)



Elementary school principals were more likely than middle and high school principals to say that the following outcomes are very influential or influential in deciding to provide physical activity programs at their school: engagement in academic learning (82 percent v. 75 percent and 65 percent, respectively), academic achievement (80 percent v. 70 percent and 62 percent, respectively), decreases in behavioral issues (77 percent v. 68 percent and 63 percent, respectively), and social-emotional learning (74 percent v. 63 percent and 63 percent, respectively).

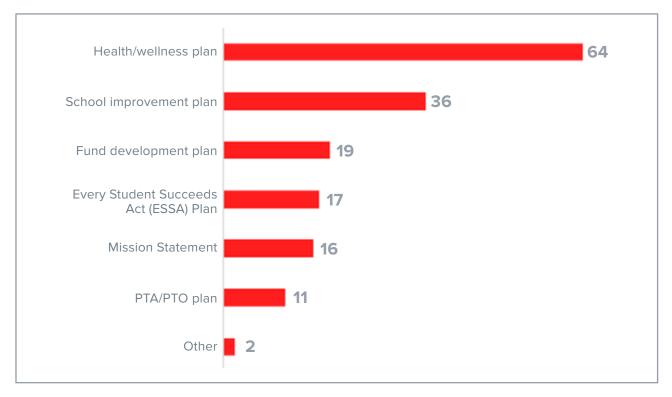
Elementary school principals were more likely than high school principals to say that overall health is very influential or influential (84 percent v. 76 percent, respectively).

Two-Thirds of Principals Report That Physical Education and/or Physical Activity is Incorporated Into Their School's Health and Wellness Plan

In many schools, promoting physical activity is not just a practice, it is written into some of their guiding documents. Eight in 10 principals said that physical education or physical activity is included in at least one of the key statements or plans the school follows. It is most often included in the health and wellness plan, with 64 percent of principals saying it can be found there. These results are summarized in Figure 7.



FIGURE 7: PRINCIPAL-REPORTED INCLUSION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND/OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOL DOCUMENTS (%)



Elementary school principals were more likely than middle and high school principals to say that physical education or physical activity are incorporated into the School Improvement Plan (40 percent v. 30 percent and 25 percent, respectively) and the school PTA/PTO plan (14 percent v. 7 percent and 5 percent, respectively). Elementary school principals were more likely than high school principals to say that physical education or physical activity are incorporated into the school fund development plan (21 percent v. 13 percent, respectively).

Securing external funding and in-kind contributions for physical education and physical activity is often a group effort. Almost half of principals (48 percent) reported that they work with their physical education teacher(s), other school staff, and/or parents to secure additional resources for physical education and physical activity at their school.

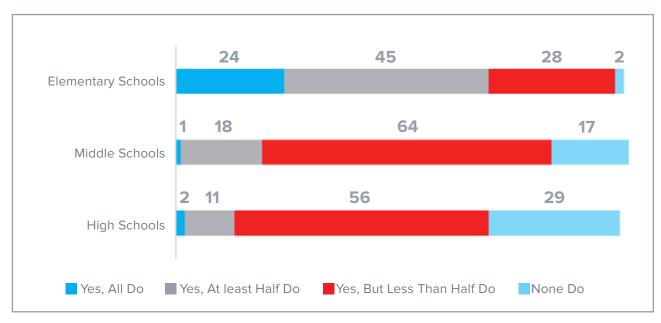
Nearly All Principals Say at Least Some Teachers at Their Schools Incorporate Physical Activity in Their Classrooms, but This Varies by School Level

Eighty-nine percent of principals said that at least some classroom teachers at their school integrate physical activity into their classroom as part of academic lessons and/or by providing physical activity breaks. Specifically, 13 percent said all teachers do, 34 percent said at least half do, 41 percent who said less than half do, and 10 percent said that none do.

There are differences among principals by school level with physical activity in the classroom being most common in elementary school and least common in high school, as shown in Figure 8.



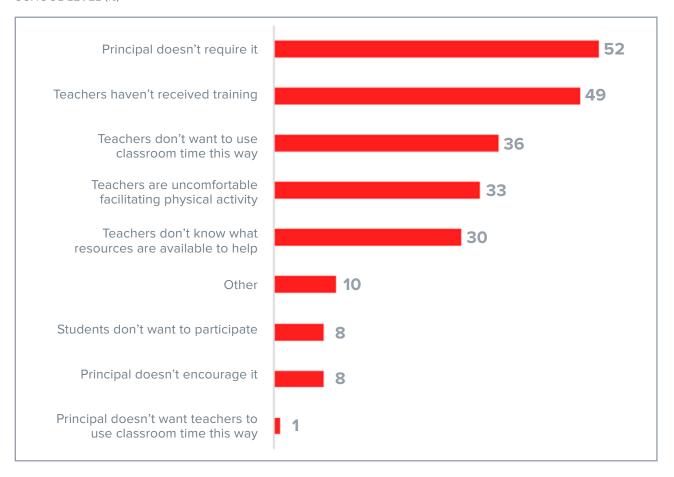
FIGURE 8: PRINCIPAL-REPORTED TEACHER INTEGRATION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INTO THE CLASSROOM AS PART OF ACADEMIC LESSONS AND/OR BY PROVIDING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BREAKS, BY SCHOOL LEVEL (%)



Among those principals who said that not all of their teachers incorporate physical activity into their classrooms, the reasons are varied, as shown in Figure 9. About half of principals said they do not require it (52 percent) and that the teachers have not received training (49 percent). Just 1 percent of principals said they do not want their teachers using classroom time for physical activity.



FIGURE 9: PRINCIPAL-REPORTED REASONS WHY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS NOT INCORPORATED BY TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM AS PART OF ACADEMIC LESSONS AND/OR BY PROVIDING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BREAKS, BY SCHOOL LEVEL (%)



High school principals were more likely than middle and elementary school principals to report that students do not want to participate in classroom physical activity (17 percent v. 8 percent and 4 percent, respectively). High school principals were more likely than elementary school principals to report that they do not require it (57 percent v. 47 percent, respectively) and that teachers do not want to use classroom time this way (44 percent v. 32 percent, respectively). Middle and high school principals were more likely than elementary school principals to report that teachers have not received training (59 percent and 60 percent v. 41 percent, respectively) and they do not encourage it (10 percent and 14 percent v. 4 percent, respectively).

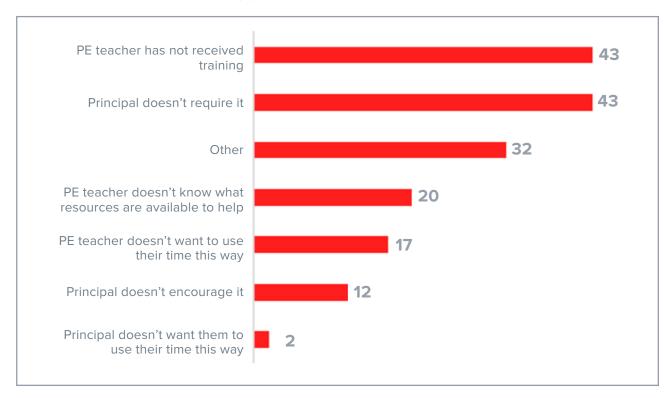
A Majority of School Principals Say the Physical Education Teacher Serves as Their School's Physical Activity Leader

More than half of principals (56 percent) said the physical education teacher serves as their school's physical activity leader. This was more likely the case in elementary schools (60 percent) than middle schools (54 percent) and high schools (46 percent).

Among principals who said their physical education teacher does not serve as their school's physical activity leader, various reasons why were cited, as shown in Figure 10. Forty-three percent reported that they do not require the physical education teacher to serve in this role or the physical education teacher has not received training to serve in this role (43 percent). Fewer say it is because the physical eduction teacher does not know what resources are available to help them (20 percent), the physical education teacher does not want to use their time this way (17 percent), the principal does not encourage it (12 percent), and the principal does not want the physical education teacher to use their time this way (2 percent).



FIGURE 10: PRINCIPAL-REPORTED REASONS WHY PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS DO NOT SERVE AS THEIR SCHOOL'S PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEADER (%)



Additionally, 32 percent provided a write-in response for the answer option of "other." The four most common write-in responses were: (1) someone else serves as the school's physical activity leader (e.g., multiple staff, all staff, athletic/sports program director, parents, PTA, individual(s) responsible for before and after school programs such as extended day program staff), (2) the physical education teacher is only part-time at the school, (3) the physical education teacher does not have the time because of scheduling conflicts and other commitments, and (4) the role of school physical activity leader is outside of the physical education teacher's current job description and/or is not included in their contractual time and there could be union issues.

High school principals were more likely than elementary school principals to report that they do not require their physical education teacher to serve as the school's physical activity leader (54 percent v. 36 percent) and they do not encourage it (18 percent v. 7 percent).

Most principals (89 percent) reported that it is extremely important, very important, or important to them that the teachers at their school serve as role models for active and healthy lives. Almost half (45 percent) said it is extremely or very important while another 44 percent said it is important.

PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES ABOUT ACTIVE SCHOOLS

Few Parents Have Regular Conversations With Their Child About Their Physical Education Class

Although a majority of parents (70 percent) believe it is extremely or very important for their child to have physical education class, only 37 percent talk frequently with their child about what they are learning in their physical education class. Thirty-two percent of parents said they talk with their child about this infrequently, and 24 percent of parents said they do not talk to their child at all about what they are learning in physical education class. A small percentage of parents (6 percent) reported their child does not have physical education. Among those who talk with their child about physical education class, parents of elementary school students were more likely than parents of high school students to talk with their child about what they are learning (73 percent v. 64 percent, respectively).

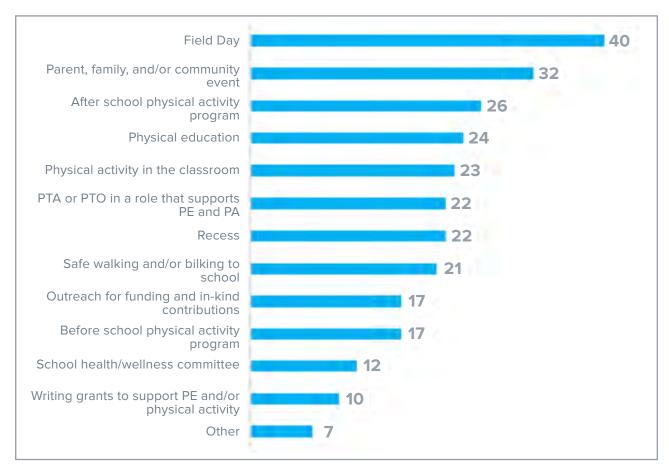
About one quarter of parents (28 percent) said they observed or participated in their child's physical education class during the past school year. This was more common among parents of elementary school students than parents of high school students (34 percent v. 21 percent).

A Majority of Parents Volunteer With Their Child's School Physical Activity Programs

Most parents reported that they volunteered with their child's school physical activity programs during the past school year. When asked about different programs and events at their child's school, six in 10 parents indicated that they volunteered for at least one. As shown in Figure 11, Field Day is the most common, with 40 percent of parents saying they volunteered at this event, followed by 32 percent of parents saying they volunteered at other parent, family, or community events like a fitness night or a fun run/walk.



FIGURE 11: PARENTS WHO VOLUNTEERED TO HELP WITH SCHOOL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS, EVENTS OR NEEDS DURING THE 2017-18 SCHOOL YEAR (%)

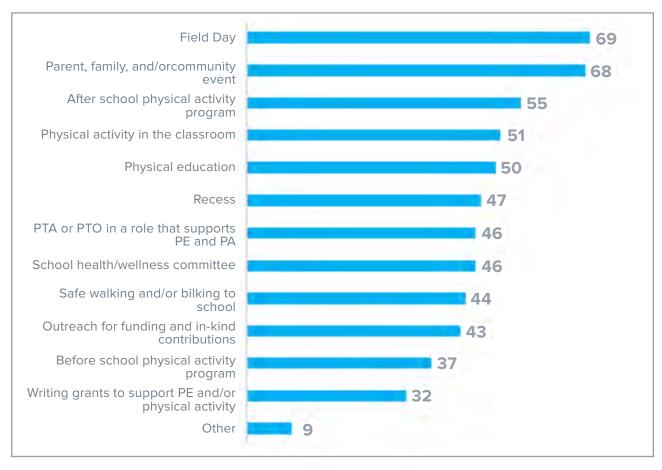


Parents of elementary school children were the most involved, with 72 percent saying they have volunteered for at least one physical activity program in the last year compared to 59 percent of parents of middle school children and 51 percent of parents of high school children.

Nearly all parents expressed interest in helping with at least one type of school physical activity program, event, or need at their child's school if given the opportunity, as shown in Figure 12. Eighty-eight percent of parents said they would help with at least one of the 13 physical activities that were listed. Interest is highest in helping with Field Day (69 percent) and a parent, family or community event (68 percent).



FIGURE 12: PARENTS INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH SCHOOL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS, EVENTS OR NEEDS, WHEN OFFERED (%)

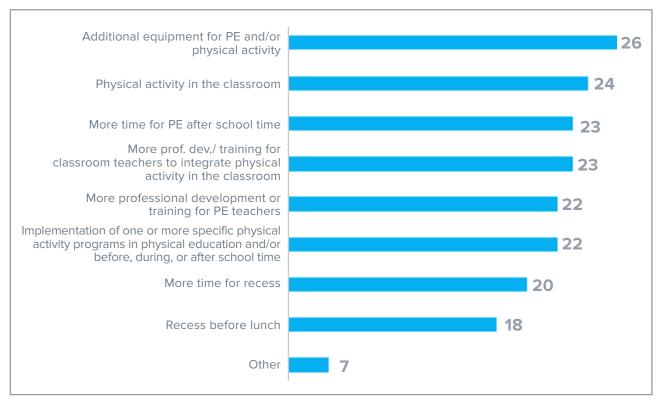


About 4 in 10 Parents Say They Have Communicated With Their Child's Principal About the School's Physical Activity Programs, But Fewer Have Communicated With the School Board

Thirty-nine percent of parents reported communicating with their child's school principal or assistant principal about physical education or physical activity programs during the past school year. Most commonly, they reported discussing additional equipment for physical education or physical activity (26 percent) and physical activity in the classroom (24 percent), as shown in Figure 13.



FIGURE 13: PARENTS WHO COMMUNICATED ABOUT PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND/OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WITH THE PRINCIPAL AT THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL DURING THE 2017-18 SCHOOL YEAR, BY TOPIC OF COMMUNICATION (%)



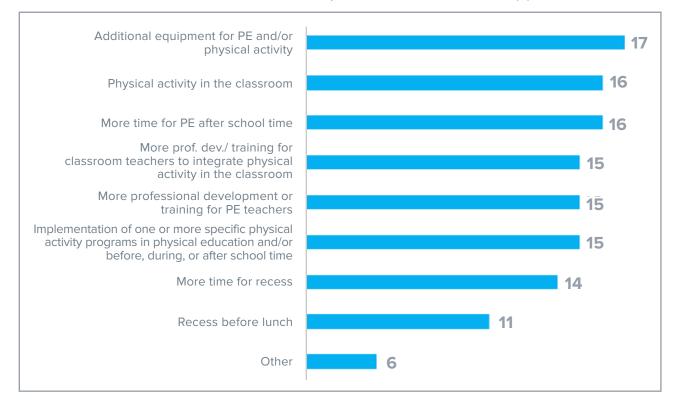
However, principals provided a different account regarding parent communication with them about physical activity at the school. While 39 percent of parents reported communicating about physical education or physical activity to the principal, only 12 percent of principals said that parents very or somewhat frequently communicated with them. Though communication was still rare, elementary school principals and middle school principals were more likely than high school principals to say they had this type of conversation with parents very or somewhat frequently (14 percent and 12 percent v. 4 percent, respectively).

Principals said that when parents communicated with them about physical activity at the school, it was most often about additional equipment for physical education or physical activity (29 percent), more time for recess (25 percent), or implementation of specific physical activity programs (22 percent).

When these conversations did occur, principals said they very or somewhat frequently happened at parent or family events (22 percent), one-on-one meetings (19 percent), through the school health and wellness committee (18 percent), through the school PTA or PTO (18 percent), and some other way (2 percent).

Parent communication with the district school board about physical education or physical activity was less commonly reported, with 29 percent of parents saying they had done this in the past three years. When discussed, the most common topics were additional equipment for physical education or physical activity (17 percent), physical activity in the classroom (16 percent), and more time for physical education (16 percent), as shown in Figure 14.

FIGURE 14: PARENTS WHO COMMUNICATED WITH THE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD ABOUT PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND/OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN THE LAST THREE YEARS, BY TOPIC OF COMMUNICATION (%)



CONCLUSION

The data from this survey show us that opportunities abound for parents and principals to use their influence to make schools more active places. Based on the abundance of research about the health and academic benefits of physical activity participation, creating active school environments for all children and adolescents is an action worth taking.

REFERENCES

¹ US Department of Health and Human Services. 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, 2018.









