

# Active Schools

## Active Schools Menus of Evidence-Based Practices

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UNIVERSITY OF  
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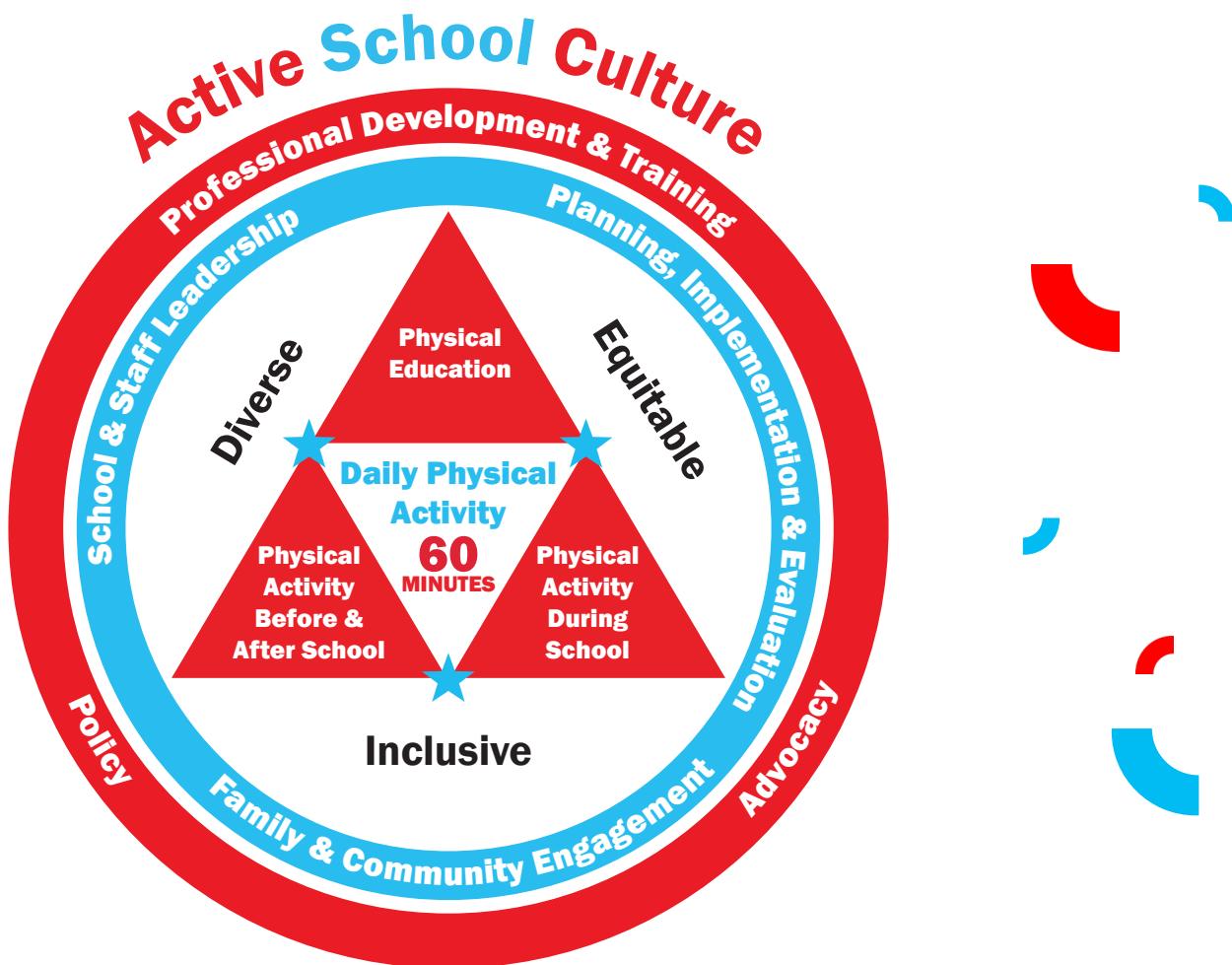
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## Introduction and Intended Use

The menus of evidence-based practices in this document are designed to provide schools with actionable steps that can be taken to promote an active school culture on PK-12 campuses around the country. The menus are aligned with the nine essential elements of an active school culture defined in the Active Schools Guiding Framework.

### Essential Elements of an Active School Culture



Evidence-based practices are applied in schools by considering: (a) the best available research evidence, (b) the characteristics, needs, values, and preferences of a school community, and (c) the human, environmental, and physical resources available. Therefore, schools are encouraged to implement strategies that not only align with the research-based practices listed on each menu, but that also take into account the local school context.

The menus can be used to document practices that are already being implemented or to plan for new programs and practices. Active Schools offers a recognition program by which schools can submit evidence of implementation to receive awards and incentives. Visit [www.activeschoolsus.org](http://www.activeschoolsus.org) for more information about the school recognition program.



## Menu of Evidence-Based Practices

### Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Opportunities for Physical Activity

#### Opportunities for Physical Activity

- Offer opportunities for students to be active before, during, and after the school day
- Ensure activities include aerobic, bone strengthening, and muscle strengthening opportunities
- Offer more than 60 minutes of physical activity opportunities each day
- Have a physical activity expert (e.g., physical education teacher) review activity options to ensure they are age-appropriate, safe, and contribute to the joy of physical activity

#### Inclusive

- When information is presented to students, ensure it is presented in multiple ways (e.g., verbally, through images, videos, demonstrations)
- Offer a variety of equipment students can choose from when performing tasks, skills, and playing games
- Allow students to choose the level of challenge they wish to experience (e.g., distance, height, speed, level of competition) within activities
- Keep the focus on individualized goals and achieving one's personal best
- Enlist the support of trained paraprofessionals to assist students with disabilities in physical activity settings
- Use peer tutoring to teach skills and develop positive relationships among students

#### Culturally Responsive

- Ensure physical education teachers and physical activity facilitators take deliberate steps to get to know students and form relationships
- Give students a voice by conducting surveys and giving opportunities for feedback and discussion
- Present images and multimedia with diverse role models so students can see representations of themselves in imagery
- Present information to students and families in native languages
- Have school leaders engage in diversity training and critical self-reflection

#### Equitable

- Evaluate participation and satisfaction rates in physical activity opportunities to expose any disparities that may exist
- Ensure equal opportunity for physical activity regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, or any other personal characteristic



# Menu of Evidence-Based Practices

## Physical Education

### Policy and Environment

- Advocate for robust physical education policies and practices that are aligned with SHAPE America's national recommendations
- Require all students to take physical education for 150 minutes per week at the elementary level and 225 minutes per week at the secondary level
- Include all students in physical education and do not allow waivers, exemptions, or substitutions
- Ensure class sizes in physical education are similar to other subject areas
- Ensure physical education is being taught by certified/licensed physical education teachers
- Do not assign or withhold physical activity as punishment

### Student Assessment

- Ensure assessments are aligned with national or state standards
- Conduct student assessment that measures student progress in the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains
- Conduct formative assessments that monitor student learning and inform instruction
- Conduct summative assessment to evaluate student learning at the end of instructional units
- Grade students on the achievement of standards
- Regularly report assessment results to students and parents/guardians

### Curriculum

- Develop a physical education curriculum based on national or state physical education standards
- Have a written physical education curriculum that is sequential and comprehensive
- Use a physical education curriculum that is consistent with the design of curricula for other subject areas

### Appropriate Instruction

- Use deliberate-practice tasks that support the goals and objectives defined in the school's physical education curriculum
- Teach to the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains of learning
- Differentiate instruction and modify tasks to meet the individual needs of students
- Maximize the number of practice opportunities for motor skill development
- Ensure at least 50% of physical education class time is spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity
- Offer physical education with adequate equipment and space
- Provide meaningful and constructive feedback to students



## Menu of Evidence-Based Practices

### Physical Activity During the School Day

#### Classroom Movement

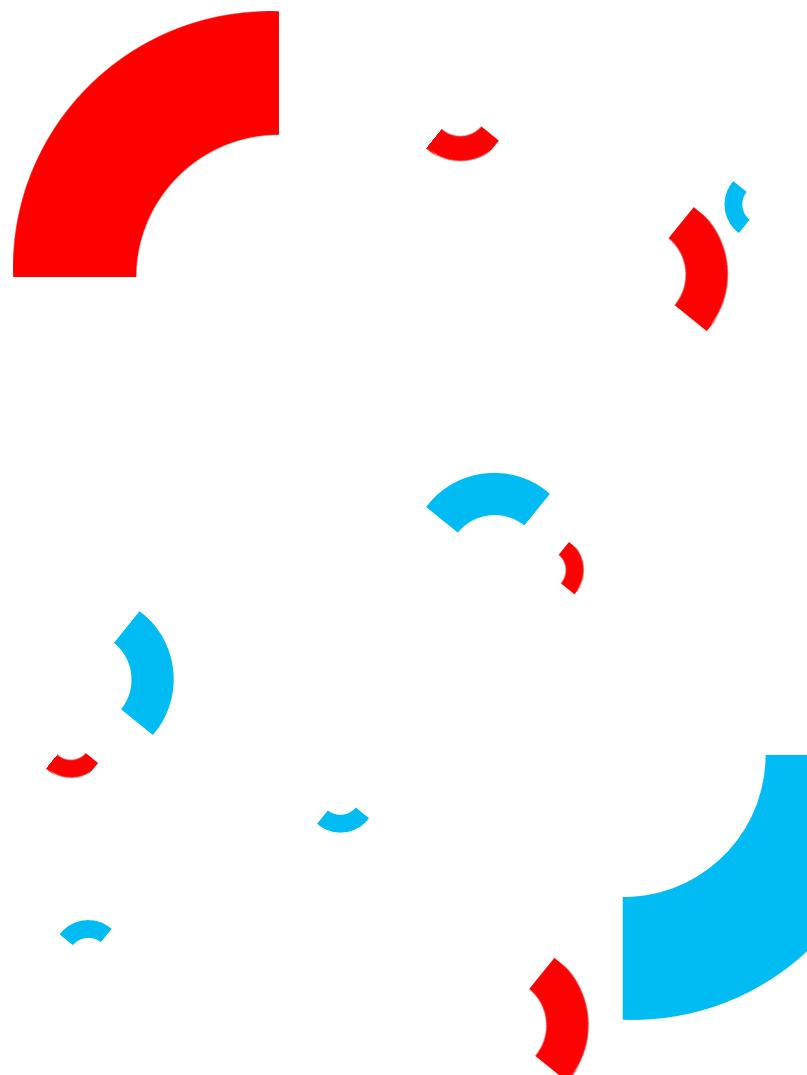
- Include several opportunities throughout the day for students to move in the classroom, including: physically active academic lessons, brain energizers, active transitions, and flexible seating options
- Provide teachers and staff with professional development related to classroom movement
- Plan classroom movement activities that require little-to-no equipment
- Offer movement opportunities in the classroom that are ~10 minutes in duration
- Establish a management plan for classroom movement
- Include classroom movement in all grade levels

#### Recess and Breaks

- Ensure that all students, regardless of grade level, have multiple breaks throughout the day where there are physical activity opportunities available
- Provide supervision by trained adults
- Ensure access to play equipment and facilities during recess and breaks
- Create engaging play areas using playground markings that encourage activity and/or designate zones for various types of activities

#### Other Physical Activity Opportunities

- Allow students and staff to have walking discussions and/or meetings throughout the school day
- Organize intramurals that are accessible to all students and that include a variety of non-traditional and traditional activities
- Create active pathways in hallways and around the school building to stimulate more movement when students are transitioning throughout the day





## Menu of Evidence-Based Practices

### Physical Activity Before & After School

#### Before & After School Programs & Clubs

- Offer a mileage club where students can walk or jog with friends and track their mileage.
- Facilitate a club that is focused on reinforcing healthy behaviors like good nutrition and physical activity
- Work with existing after school program providers to offer structured and unstructured physical activity opportunities for students
- Train before/after school program providers on strategies to promote physical activity in a positive manner
- Ensure that after school programs have policies aligned with healthy eating and physical activity (HEPA) standards
- Survey students to identify their interests related to physically active clubs or sports
- Identify school staff and volunteers who have expertise and interest in leading physical activity clubs

#### Active Transportation

- Form a group of parents and school community members interested in promoting active transportation
- Conduct an audit of the built environment around the school with attention towards accessibility and safety
- Ensure sufficient infrastructure for bike/scooter/skateboard storage
- Work with local law enforcement to address unsafe traffic practices
- Host special events like walk/bike to school days to promote active transportation
- Formally educate children about the benefits of active transportation and how to do it safely
- Facilitate a walking school bus where community members walk to school with neighborhood children
- Promote participation in walking school buses using signage, announcements, newsletters, PTA meetings, local neighborhood associations, etc.

#### Youth Sports

- Offer intramural sports at least two days per week before or after school
- Consider non-traditional intramural sports or games that are inclusive of all ability levels
- Offer more competitive interscholastic sport opportunities with limited or no fees or cuts
- Partner with local recreational sports providers to encourage sport participation among students
- Secure shared-use agreements so community sport providers can use school facilities outside of school hours
- Ensure youth sport opportunities connected to the school are focused on physical literacy and positive social skills



## Form an Active School Committee

- Create a triad of an active school champion, supportive school administrator, and an active school committee
- Identify an active school champion, who is oftentimes a physical education teacher, to coordinate the active school committee and facilitate meetings
- Provide formal training for the active school champion for this role
- Identify a supportive administrator to join the triad who values and prioritizes physical activity, serves as a role model, supports physical activity programming, and builds community
- Have the active school committee work closely with district and school administrators to manage policies, programs, events, and resources
- Include diverse school community members on the active school committee
- Secure funding for physical activity programs

## Menu of Evidence-Based Practices School and Staff Leadership

### Empower Teachers and School Staff

- Provide ongoing professional development for teachers and school staff related to school physical activity promotion
- Provide teachers and school staff with resources (e.g., equipment, curriculum materials) to support physical activity integration during the school day
- Allow teachers and school staff the autonomy to determine how to integrate physical activity into their routines
- Encourage teachers and school staff to act as role models for leading a physically active lifestyle

### Staff Wellness Program

- Include staff wellness initiatives in the school's goals and annual plans
- Provide diverse opportunities for school staff to participate in physical activity
- Use strategies such as goal-setting, wellness screening with follow-ups, and personalized counseling to support school staff wellness efforts
- Offer incentives for participation in staff wellness programs



# Menu of Evidence-Based Practices

## Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation

### Needs Assessment, Goals & Objectives

- Conduct a needs assessment to determine areas of strength and weakness in physical activity opportunities before, during, and after school
- Identify assets in the school community that can contribute to physical activity opportunities for students
- Write a goal statement that articulates the school's vision for an active school culture
- Write Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) objectives for physical activity

### Evidence-Based Practices & Adaptation

- Identify research-based programs and practices that could be applied to your unique school environment
- Seek input from key stakeholders (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents, students) about which programs and practices may work best for your school
- Adapt and modify programs and practices as necessary to meet the needs, values, and preferences of your school community

### Continuous Improvement & Sustainability

- Organize, analyze, and report to the school community data related to process and outcome measures
- Make a list of areas of strength and areas for improvement

### School Capacity & Implementation Planning

- Conduct an audit of your school's financial, environmental, and human resources for physical activity programming
- Make a detailed list of tasks associated with implementation of new programs and practices and assign specific people to be in charge of each implementation task
- Create a timeline for implementation
- Publicly post your school's implementation plan and market your physical activity initiative to the school community

### Process & Outcome Evaluation

- Develop an evaluation plan that includes both process and outcome measures
- Collect information on process measures such as frequency/duration of opportunities, participation rates, satisfaction, expenses. etc.
- Collect information on outcomes related to your school's physical activity goals and objectives
- Measure physical activity levels of students



## Menu of Evidence-Based Practices

### Family and Community Engagement

#### Family Engagement

- Consider cultural, parental, and socio-environmental factors when designing physical activity programs
- Keep families informed through frequent communication via newsletters, emails, phone calls, texts, fliers, bulletin boards, social media, etc.
- Provide goal-setting ideas and monthly family physical activity calendars
- Focus on “fun” rather than “good for health” to encourage families to be physically active
- Create volunteer opportunities for families related to physical activity programming

#### Active School Events

- Plan multiple active school events throughout the school year to accommodate families’ diverse schedules
- Invite local sport and health organizations to assist with the school’s physical activity programs or events

#### Partner with Community Organizations

- Invite community members and organizations to school events to develop mutually beneficial partnerships
- Develop shared-use agreements with community organizations to use school facilities and vice versa
- Partner with university faculty who can provide effective strategies and resources for promoting physical activity and assist with program evaluation

#### Family & Community Members on Active School Committee

- Invite and include diverse family and community members on the active school committee



## Menu of Evidence-Based Practices

### Policy and Advocacy

#### Policy

- Consider physical activity and physical education in all school-level policy decisions
- Make sure that the voices of diverse stakeholders are considered in all policy discussions and decisions
- Provide professional development for school staff to learn how to effectively implement physical activity policy
- Develop accountability measures to ensure that policies are being implemented as intended

#### Advocacy

- Partner with like-minded organizations in order to more effectively advocate for physical activity and physical education in schools
- Consult ready-made advocacy resources that have been developed by reputable organizations for use by teachers and schools
- Focus on the benefits of physical activity when advocating for priorities connected to an active school





## Menu of Evidence-Based Practices Professional Development and Training

### Quality Professional Development

Use strategies such as interactive learning and authentic inquiry to promote active engagement during professional development sessions

Survey teachers and school staff to determine their needs and interests around promoting an active school culture

Offer ongoing professional development, technical assistance, and networking opportunities to facilitate communities of continued learning

Focus professional development on student outcomes by addressing content, pedagogy, and assessment

### Professional Development for School Physical Activity Promotion

Offer specific training for teachers, administrators, and school staff on how to integrate and promote physical activity in schools

Include ideas for larger systems-level change (e.g., scheduling, funding) in addition to practical strategies for day-to-day physical activity integration

Offer free registration, paid leave, and continuing education credits for participation in professional development

Focus on starting or expanding one or two components of a comprehensive school physical activity program at a time

### Training and Skills

Identify an active school champion with physical activity-specific expertise

Ensure the designated active school champion has the knowledge and skills to advocate for physical education and physical activity, train other school staff, and coordinate schoolwide physical activity programs

Compensate the active school champion for their time

Hire teachers of all subjects who have graduated from teacher preparation programs that provide robust curriculum and instruction connected to school-based physical activity promotion

Encourage in-service teachers to pursue ongoing professional development via workshops, online trainings, and graduate education

Include questions about physical activity expertise in job interviews



# Program Endorsement

Active Schools

Partner organizations that offer programs aligned with evidence-based practices in any of the nine essential elements of an active school culture are invited to apply for Active Schools Program Endorsement. Programs undergo a rigorous review process to determine alignment with evidence-based practices in selected elements. Programs that achieve endorsement are highlighted on the following pages of the Menus of Evidence-Based Practices and on the Active Schools website.





# Endorsed Programs- 2023



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

A resource for classroom teachers to provide practical physical activity ideas that can be integrated into regular classroom content areas.



DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION -- PHYSICAL EDUCATION -- PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL -- SCHOOL & STAFF LEADERSHIP -- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

CATCH Global Foundation's mission is to empower school communities to cultivate whole child wellness as a lever for student success and social equity.



## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

OPEN provides high quality curriculum resources free to every school to provide equity of access to the entire physical education community.



# Endorsed Programs- 2024



## MARATHON KIDS

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING THE SCHOOL DAY -- PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL

Through running, Marathon Kids shows kids they can achieve more than they thought possible and put them on the path to healthier lives.



## cyclekids

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

CYCLE Kids is committed to working with schools to ensure the basic rights of children to a healthy physical and emotional start in life.



# Endorsed Programs- 2025



## WALKABOUTS™

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

The Walkabouts Platform turns academic lessons into active, movement-based experiences for pre-K through 5th grade students.



DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION -- PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING THE SCHOOL DAY -- PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL -- FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

100-Mile Club is an evidence-based program that challenges kids to run, jog, or walk 100 miles during a school year, while earning MILEstone incentives along the way.

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