

# Physical Activity Increases Student Achievement:

Understanding the critical connection between student health and achievement.

## Physical Activity Helps Brain Function

According to a nationwide study, only 42 percent of children ages 6-11 years old and 8 percent of adolescents ages 12-19 years old achieve the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day. ([Troiano et al., 2008](#))

- Dairy Council of California's kindergarten through high school nutrition education programs include a physical activity component to encourage students to obtain their recommended activity each day.



Physical activity has been shown to improve the ability to learn. Physical activity improves brain functions, the ability to concentrate, memory and intellectual performance. ([Tomprowski et al., 2008](#); [Trudeau and Shephard, 2008](#))

## Fit Students Perform Better Academically

Multiple studies have shown the positive influence that physical activity has on students' academic performance. The improvement has been seen in better grades and higher scores on standardized tests. ([Coe et al., 2006](#); [Carlson et al., 2008](#))

- Dairy Council of California promotes the connection between physical activity and academic performance. Our programs are research-based, using a food-grouping system to teach that healthy food choices and exercise make up a healthy lifestyle. Evaluation has shown behavior change by the end of the program; knowledge alone is not the endpoint of our program, a sustained behavior change is the desired result.

## Physical Activity Improves Attendance

Participating in physical activity leads to better classroom behavior in school children and has been shown to increase attentiveness. ([Mahar et al., 2006](#); [De Barros et al., 2009](#))



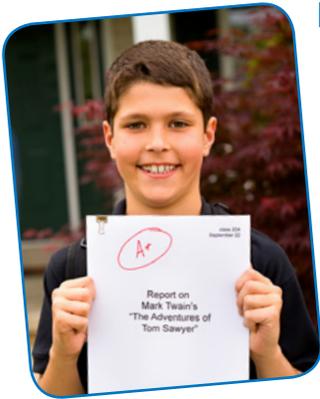
One study found that physically active students miss fewer days of school due to illness. ([NASPE, 2001a](#)) Obese children also miss more days of school than do normal-weight children (average of 4.2 days vs. 0.7 days in one month). ([Schwimmer, 2003](#))

- Dairy Council of California supports schools, teachers, students and parents. With our nutrition education curriculum, we give teachers the tools to teach their students how to make healthy choices from all food groups for their meals and snacks, we teach them how to choose a healthy breakfast and encourage 60 minutes of physical activity a day. Many of our programs come with a parent component to make a home-school connection and teach parents, along with the students, how to establish those healthy habits.

# Increased PE time ≠ decreased performance.

Active students compensate by greater efficiency of the learning process.

There is no evidence to show that increased physical-education time negatively affects performance in other subjects, despite misconceptions by school administrators, teachers and parents. ([Carlson et al., 2008](#); [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2007](#); [Taras, 2005](#); [Ahamed et al., 2007](#); [Active Living Research, 2009](#))



## Physical Activity Improves Classroom Behavior

Physical activity has been shown to increase concentration, mental ability and attention spans, thereby improving student performance in academic subjects even when time for physical education reduces class time for academics. ([Symons et al., 1997](#); [Trudeau and Shephard, 2008](#))

- Making time for physical education and nutrition education has a win-win benefit to the students and the school, which translates into healthier students, less absenteeism, better test scores and a decreased dropout rate. The students learn healthy habits to last a lifetime, reduce their risk of obesity and chronic disease and achieve higher learning abilities.

## Linking Low Physical Activity, Obesity and Low Academic Performance

Obesity has a negative effect on overall performance in school; a literature review found obesity to be associated with several measures of poor academic performance, including increased absenteeism, lower GPA and fewer years of schooling. ([Taras and Potts-Datema, 2005](#))

- Dairy Council of California's nutrition education curriculum is a way for schools to do their part in fighting obesity among their students. Our free classroom programs are grade-specific and teach students how to make healthy choices from all the food groups and choose fewer extras. Making healthy choices may lead to a decrease in overweight students and an increase in attendance. Reduced absenteeism translates into increased revenue for schools by increasing Average Daily Attendance money.

Thus, the health benefits of physical activity for all ages are well documented and include prevention and reduction in the prevalence of obesity.

- Make Dairy Council of California your partner in creating healthy schools. Our programs and services can be the core to improving the health of your students.

