

New Connections to Better Health

How Active Schools: Core 4+ Connected More School Activities for Better Outcomes

The latest information from academic, health care, and public health sectors shows that by connecting efforts and programs that used to operate independently – physical activity, nutrition, disease prevention – we can help people live healthier lives.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services Chronic Disease Prevention Program is taking a multidisciplinary approach to create lasting connections and positive outcomes. One example is the success achieved through our recent collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's *Active Schools: Core 4+* program. Together, we helped create and implement five key strategies for increasing physical activity in Wisconsin schools.

Many schools had previously looked at physical activity as an initiative that only occurred in physical education classes. But by connecting physical education with activities that took place before, during, and after school, and including family and community involvement, *Active Schools: Core 4+* students were able to get more fit more easily.



Wisconsin's students spent more than 6 hours of their school day sitting still.

According to a 2014-2015 K-12 pilot project using accelerometers, conducted by the Department of Health Services and the Department of Public Instruction.

Connecting Obesity, Activity, and Schools

From better grades and higher standardized test results to improved classroom behavior, attendance, and dropout rates, a recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirms physical activity can have a powerful and positive effect on student performance.

The benefits of physical activity in education are clear, as is the need. The percentage of overweight kids in the U.S. has tripled in the last 30 years. This does not improve as children get older, with 51% of Wisconsin teens not meeting the recommended level for daily physical activity. Add a big uptick in fast food and soft drink consumption, as well as more screen time (smartphone, TV, and video game usage), and you have less active kids eating less healthy food. These recent trends have made inactivity the new normal for school-aged children throughout Wisconsin. So what could be done to help increase activity?

Active Schools: Core 4+ sought to turn the tide by creating opportunities for children to engage in physical activity throughout their day.

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Active Schools: Core 4+ works by taking a broader look at overall student activity and connects students to healthier opportunities throughout the day beyond physical education classes. The activities are sustainable, easy to adopt, low- or no-cost, and can involve many students at a time (which helps break down barriers to participation).

The program helps Wisconsin's schools and educators adopt five key strategies:

Active Physical Education. Neenah High School uses heart rate monitors and pedometers to measure movement during PE. Students engage in instant activity upon entering their classroom. Their activity levels are used as performance measures for personalized learning and goal setting.

Active Classrooms. Neenah Coolidge Elementary added equipment into each classroom such as balance balls, treadmills, standing desks, and fidget bars at the base of chairs to incorporate active breaks into daily routine.

Active Recess and Open Gym. At Fond du Lac Riverside, students first run/walk around the running track, then utilize several active areas including four square, playground equipment, jump rope area, basketball courts, and hopscotch.

Before- and After-School Activity. Appleton Einstein Middle School created an intra-mural program open to all students.

Family and Community Physical Activity. Appleton Badger Elementary opened their fitness center to the school community in the evening.

Wisconsin is second nationally in the percentage of schools implementing the five key strategies above.

Based on the 2014 School Health Profiles Report, Center for Disease Control and Prevention. See [Wisconsin Success Stories](#) for specific examples in Wisconsin schools.

“Not just in Physical Education class, not just at recess, but throughout the fabric of these kids’ school day, they’re moving. All day, every day.”

David Lockett, Principal, Jefferson Elementary



Active Schools: Core 4+ introduced classroom Brain Breaks—short timeouts that let kids get up, stretch their legs, and be active.

What Happens When It's ALL Connected?

Wisconsin's Chronic Disease Prevention Program and its many partners across the state are working to connect more aspects of public health to help people live healthier lives. Programs include diabetes, heart disease, nutrition, physical activity, and obesity.

The more we connect, the more we achieve. We get healthier environments, greater health equity, increased productivity, lower health care costs, increased life expectancy, and an improved quality of life.

To learn more about how you can improve health, visit dhs.wisconsin.gov/disease/chronic-disease.htm.

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