

# Research: Physical activity can boost academic performance

## Recess, PE seen as productive

By Nancy Hellmich  
USA TODAY

Going to PE class and recess can be a win-win situation for students.

Physical activity improves kids' fitness and lowers their risk of obesity. And now a government review of research shows that children who take breaks from classroom to be physically active during the school day are often better able to concentrate



By Stephanie Yao, AP

**Jump-start:** Studies show children benefit from play and phys ed.

on their school work and may do better on standardized tests.

In many schools, physical education classes and recess have

been squeezed out because of increasing educational demands and tough financial times.

"Some short-sighted people

thought that cutting back on time spent on physical education to spend more time drilling for tests would improve test scores," says Howell Wechsler, director of the Division of Adolescent and School Health for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"But there are a lot of studies that show that more time for PE and other physical activity help improve academic performance." He and colleagues reviewed 50 studies that examined the effect of school-based physical activity on academic performance. Half of the findings showed positive associations; half showed no effect.

but virtually none of the research showed any harm. The findings, released Wednesday:

▶ Recess can improve students' attention and concentration and ability to stay on task.

▶ Increased time in PE classes can help children's attention, concentration and achievement test scores.

▶ Short physical activity breaks of 5 to 20 minutes in the classroom can improve attention span, classroom behavior and achievement tests scores.

▶ Participating in sports teams and physical activity clubs can improve grade point average,

school attachment, educational goals and chances of graduation. How can schools get kids to be more active with tight budgets?

Charlene Burgeson of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, a group of physical education and sports professionals, says: "Sometimes it doesn't take more money as much as more creativity and imagination."

"Recess supervisors can be trained to inspire active play. The physical education teacher can help classroom teachers design active breaks so kids get up and moving and are ready to learn."