Let’s get physical

Increasing the amount of moderate and vigorous physical activity in an out-of-school time program increases the overall quality and health of that program. The National AfterSchool Association adopted Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Standards that guide program decisions. These standards include an expectation that each child has an opportunity for 60 minutes of varied, moderate, or vigorous physical activity per day. In before- and after-school programs, the expectation is adjusted to 30 minutes.

Review the past week’s program/lesson plan. Using the table below, fill in as many indoor and outdoor physical activities as you can think of that were offered to your program’s children this past week. Check the appropriate descriptors regarding the type of physical activity for each activity. More than one check mark per entry may be appropriate.

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What do you notice?

When all the entries are complete, review the results.

• What columns have lots of check marks?

• What columns have few or no check marks?

• What can you or your program do or change to provide a more balanced healthy physical activity routine for the children in your care?

• How can you make the changes? What do you need to do or plan first? Who do you need to involve?

Discuss this assignment with your site supervisor or teaching team. Brainstorm ways to increase the amount of movement and the variety of movement within your school-age program in order to create a healthier space for children and staff.

• Aerobic activity is sometimes called endurance activity, and can vary in intensity. It uses large muscles and increases the heart and breathing rate. Examples include running, swimming, walking, dancing, jumping rope, and jumping jacks. Over time, regular aerobic activity helps your heart and lungs to work better.

• Light intensity activities are common daily activities and don’t require much effort.

• Moderate intensity activities produce noticeable increases in heart and breathing rate. A person doing moderate activities can talk but not sing while exercising.

• Vigorous activities make the heart, lungs, and muscles work hard and a person can usually only say a few words without stopping for a breath.

Muscle and bone strengthening exercises improve power and strength. Examples include doing push-ups or sit-ups, digging in a garden, climbing stairs, playing basketball or soccer, doing cartwheels. Some, but not all, muscle and bone strengthening exercises are also aerobic exercises.