

# Fitness For Active Families

## Active Kids Learn Better

(NAPSA)—Parents can help their children take the right steps toward fitness. That's a particularly good thing, because children today tend to be less active than in generations past. Twenty-five percent of all children watch at least four hours of television daily. Most children sit on the bus or in a car pool rather than expending their own energy to get to and from school. Although health experts recommend that children be active an hour a day, fewer than 25 percent get even 30 minutes of daily activity.

This decrease in physical activity contributes significantly to America's burgeoning childhood obesity rates. Nine million American children are overweight, three times more than in 1980.

Schools are uniquely positioned to reverse these alarming trends, and ensure that children get the physical activity and physical education they need.

What's more, educators have discovered the academic potential of getting kids out of their seats. Physically active students have demonstrated higher test scores, better concentration and less disruptive behavior even when class time has been reduced to allow for extra time to be active.

Faced with pressure to improve test scores, however, some schools eliminated recess to provide more class time. Often, parents are not aware that schools aren't providing adequate opportunities for physical activity. In a national survey, most parents thought their children's schools were doing a "good" to "excellent" job making daily physical education available to all students. Fewer than 8 percent of schools, however, actually provide students with daily physical education. The survey was conducted by Action for Healthy Kids, a nonprofit



organization that works inclusively at the national, state and local levels to encourage sustained improvements in school nutrition and physical activity practices.

A federal mandate requires most schools to implement a Local Wellness Policy. Created at the district level, Local Wellness Policies set goals for physical activity and physical education, as well as nutrition education and nutrition standards for foods available at school.

Action for Healthy Kids encourages parents to learn about their children's school's policy and find out how to help. Here are a few tips:

### Get Children to Move More

- Teach children to spot opportunities to move, such as parking at the end of a parking lot.
- Bike or walk wherever possible. Use the car as a last resort.
- Establish an escorted "walking pool" to replace the car pool in your neighborhood.
- Promote Safe Routes to School so children can walk or bike safely.
- Join an Action for Healthy Kids Team to promote student wellness.

For more information, visit [www.ActionForHealthyKids.org](http://www.ActionForHealthyKids.org).