

Welcome to "After School Gets Moving."

We've organized this program into two parts. Part one is a training for all staff who work in After School and part two is a game guide for you to learn how to play and lead a variety of games.

Part One - Training for After School Staff

I am part of the team of health, fitness and education specialists from across the country bringing you this training. We've made it especially for staff who work with tight budgets and in limited space for play. We focus on children from with from age six to ten because that is when healthy habits at after school begin.

We're all know that healthy eating is a part of healthy living--and so is physical activity. The two need to work hand in hand to support children's wellness and they are both key in keeping children from the health risks that come with being overweight. Recently...

the Centers for Disease Control found that 70% of overweight 5-17 yr. olds have increased risk for cardio vascular disease, asthma, sleep apnea and type 2 diabetes later in life.

The good news is: WE in after school are in a perfect position to make a real impact on our children's health.

This training will help you get your after school moving within your program's existing framework and without the need for new equipment, staff or extra space.

We'll show you how small changes can make a BIG difference.

MODULE ONE - Why Movement Matters

Because of the time, place and the relationships we share with children every day, after school staff have unique opportunities to see that kids get the physical and other benefits that come with exercise and play.

MS. Hurd: I think especially for urban kids who cant always be outside. You know they are stuck inside and when they tell me things like I can't, my mom says I cant go outside. that's a reality for them and for other kids its not. And so having afterschool where its a safe place to play and be themselves and be risk takers is great.

Jean: it's not just that it's good for the kids to have fun playing, we're in a situation right now where it's really important for all the kids to play because of the obesity epidemic and the rising chronic disease epidemic that comes behind it.

Ideally, 6 to 10 year olds should get at least an hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. Now, it doesn't have to be all at once - activity can be broken up into several 10 to fifteen minute bursts of vigorous movement throughout every day.

JEAN: People who exercise will acknowledge that they concentrate better after they exercise it has a calming influence on individuals and that's true in children also

Moderate exercise releases the brain chemicals, dopamine and neuromepinephrine. These chemicals tend to elevate children's mood without increasing their adrenaline levels, and that's good because too much adrenaline can lead to hyperactivity.

So exercise actually plays a role in keeping kids feeling and behaving well.

MO: One of the critical mistakes is that people have young people walk into after school and go right downstairs and do their homework. It feels good and sounds good to us but we say to parents if you take ten minutes to bring their incoming energy the wow woo! I got to after school-I'm out of school energy, if you do something active for those ten minutes you can bring their energy down to a place where they're ready to do the next thing. And it's that investment that helps young people make the transitions that they need.

Jeremy: I remember watching coach use some attention getters like match me and clap twice if you can hear my voice to really engage the students so they would be ready for the games they were about to play and then when the games were over he would again use these transitional activities - if you can hear my voice touch your nose, if you can hear my voice touch your head if you can hear my voice touch your knees and he would trick they kids so they were really focused and paying attention so when it was time to transition back into the classroom they were ready to learn.

It's not just the focus and readiness that translates from physical activity into the rest of our kids' lives, it's also the confidence.

MO: if we can help him to build success and build a sense of self confidence in other things, in physical activity and moving around and being engaged with others and being in dialogue with others he can translate that confidence back into the classroom

During After School we can support the development of healthy, engaged, balanced young people—simply by playing games!

Let's look at an example of a game that builds healthy self- esteem and social skills while getting kids motivated and moving.

Lola: I love watching their dance moves they're open about it, they just do whatever they wanna do and they don't care, they dance like no one's watching

This simple game helps students practice controlling their impulses AND their bodies at the same time. It beautifully supports overall development. Children are learning to process and respond to information in steps: They see, interpret, plan, and then act.

It's not just motivation and self esteem that come with moving more, but young children's thinking skills develop with physical activity as well.

As we learn more about the brain and how it develops in childhood and beyond, it is clear that intelligence amounts to more than simply knowing things. It also has to do with how a person thinks.

Here's one example of a way that physical activity helps children to exercise flexible thinking:

In the game "Switch" children practice flexible thinking in three ways, 1. By planning their strategy. How will they best get to an open base before the next person? 2. By adapting quickly when their plan doesn't work as anticipated. If someone gets to the base first, they have to process and rethink and 3. Students are practicing resiliency. If they are the last person without a base, they step out until they get the chance to try a new plan.

While students are planning and plotting to make their way through a simple game, they are practicing skills that carry over into the rest of their lives: skills like patience, teamwork, conflict resolution, accepting loss and taking turns.

Intentional game playing and physical activity also helps students develop ownership over their time and choices. Here multiple games occur at once and students chose which game they want to play

Another reason to promote movement in afterschool is because it is a great way to teach problem solving skills. And problem solving is key in critical thinking. Here's an example:

In this variation on dodge ball the group is divided up into two teams, each team huddles up and secretly picks what they call a "medic" whose job it is to give "new life" to teammates who have been hit by the other side. Each team must work together to keep their "medic" safe.

Mr. C: A, Medic Dodge Ball it works really well outside the classroom because it is also teaching them strategies that they can use in the classroom. Its teaching them how to like work together as a team, it's teaching them how to be cooperative for each other. You have kids playing that never play with other kids in school

To be realistic about the possibility of moving more in our after school programs, we've got to take a look at the challenges that get in our way and options for working through them.

MODULE Two: Challenges and Solutions

Let's look at five challenges to bringing physical activity into after school: kids' resistance to trying new things, kids individual learning styles, staff example, limited space and scheduling.

Challenge 1 - Overcoming resistance to trying new things

Often times kids are resistant to trying things they aren't used to. And, it seems that more and more, what they're used to is sitting still.

Ms. Moran: We've asked them 'what are the activities that you do at home?' many of them watch TV, play video games, which is fine to a certain extent but it doesn't seem as if there is too much physical activity going on.

We also find that children resist doing physical activity because they may be out of shape and moving is uncomfortable or too demanding.

A child's previous bad experiences with physical activity or complete lack of experience may make him think that he will always get negative feedback from other children or adults.

Lola: I think some kids are afraid because they're not necessarily comfortable with themselves and being the best or the worst at something is really stressful. And how I work around that is when I pick teams just do 1 2 1 2 1 2 there's no captains because no kid likes to be picked last.

Here are more tips to help students overcome resistance to change and to feel better about themselves at the same time:

1. add creative incentives like a group reward when everyone tries a new activity
2. ask students who might not otherwise play to help introduce new activities
3. present new things as challenges
4. incorporate funny team names, cheers and signs to add excitement
5. have one of your ground rules be to "give it a try"

Challenge 2 - Different learning styles, personalities and backgrounds

A second challenge we face is part of what makes our job so engaging; all of our children have unique learning styles, temperaments, family lives and cultures. Our job is to help develop confidence and mastery while supporting healthy bodies - for all children. We can do this in two ways: 1. By introducing activities that challenge children in a gradual, progressive way and 2. By modifying games for different learning styles and strengths.

JEREMY: Integrating physical activity for the first time into your program is a huge challenge, often times kids will only pick up little pieces of what you're trying to teach them, but over time we see students building on the skills that you've brought to them and after a few months they're going to be running games on their own resolving conflicts on their own, because of what you brought to them in the first few days.

Jimmy: From September to June you notice the kids gain a lot of confidence especially when they come in September they are very timid especially if they are new to this school or if they are learning something new, something different, they kind of shy away but as time goes on they build confidence in themselves and maybe is a peer thing because if kids cheer on other students, say, "Come on, nice job you can do it," it builds up their confidence level rather than saying, "Aw you stink, you cant do that."

Ben: It's all about getting them into a routine. You teach them the rules initially then you give them the chance to remember how to play the game..... and even if only one kid knows it, that kid will say it and everyone will be like 'oh yeah, that's right' so you just gotta its a repetition, just drive it home and then that will make your life easier. But that initial establishing the routine, that's the difficult part.

As students practice physical activity they gradually become more confident with movement as a part of their life

Jean: One of the things that we see physical activity and particularly with structured exercise with kids is that uhm no matter where they start from they improve relatively quickly. It doesn't matter if they started at the lowest level or they started in the middle. The point is that they can all improve and they feel good every time they make that improvement.

Some kids love to throw, some to catch. Music and dance appeal to many but not all. It's important to notice what kids in your group respond to, their preferences, capabilities and talents.

Now that we've looked at how a gradual time line can inspire kids to move, we'll explore how to modify activities to suit children's abilities and to be inclusive.

Di: You know, coming up with different variations of the same game: using foam balls instead of tennis balls, using heel-toe walking or fire feet, which is kind of a shuffle, uhm, using fire feet instead of running around.

Lola: We use a beach ball instead of a baseball and they all can hit it they all make contact and they love it and when it comes to bases some kids have trouble with hand eye coordination so instead of using something small we use like a hula hoop.

Here are a few more ways to encourage ALL children to play:

2. Start with a practice round
3. Modify games to bring in language and culture from your students homes like substituting English words or numbers with another language and ask students for other ideas to incorporate their culture
4. Have students summarize instructions or teach games; it could help them to understand rules better
5. Have all students practice together instead of putting individuals on the spot

Challenge 3 - Staff example

It's important to acknowledge that the energy and comfort level that staff brings to physical activity sets an example, even when we don't know it.

Finding the motivation and energy to keep up with a 7 year old at 4pm is tough even on great days. But the importance of getting our young people moving and healthy is too important to let slide.

Ben: When I'm feeling' like I'm really tired or like I have no energy, I ahh, usually like to pick games that um both myself and the kids enjoy. They have their favorites and their favorites, so seeing them doing their favorite games kind of building up to it, saving it for the end, kind of gives me something to look forward to as well.

Mr. C: You have to make sure that when you come to school, and kids are tired and you're tired and your day, you want the day to be over, it's our responsibility to make sure that these kids know that they can come here and let go and we have to show them that because if they feel like we are sitting down and we aren't engaged, how are we going to expect them to be engaged. there is no way that could happen.

The barriers that prevent after school staff from playing games with their kids don't stop at energy. There are many powerful reasons staff find it difficult to move

Jean: The barriers that we typically hear fall into a few categories one is that if the staff are not physically active themselves so they are uncomfortable, they don't see themselves as role models and they're uncomfortable playing in front of the kids. But, once you get into the mix kids love to play with their teachers. They love that.

Ms Rodriguez: I remember as a child I was, I felt really awkward in my own skin and today when we were playing outside I think it helped for them to see an adult. Because there are kids of like all different sizes and it's a positive way for them to see if there's an adult interacting with them.

Here are a few more ways you can set a positive example for your students:

1. Participate in ways that feel comfortable to you like giving high fives or playing referee
2. Choose games that you like playing and encourage other staff members to do the same
3. Take care of your body and mind outside of work
4. Plan transitions ahead of time; this minimizes everyone's confusion and stress
5. Eat a healthy snack with your students to keep your energy up

Challenge 4 - Limited space

It can be tough to envision playing games when you may have little safe outdoor space and you don't have a gymnasium.

Di: Trying to find a time where I can have an entire space to myself is difficult to say the least. I had to clear out a storage space to use for game time and it took a lot probing and pushing but it was done and now we use the space all the time

If you can't change the space, consider changing the game to fit the space you do have

Di: If you are stuck in a classroom and the teachers don't want you to move their desks, they don't want you to move the chairs, how can you change the game? So it's a running game so why not have the students move heel to toe and change the different type of equipment being used.

Here are a few more ways to work within limited space:

1. Remind students about safety and boundary lines often
2. Swap playground balls for softer/lighter things
3. Have a system for moving furniture to make more space; and enlist student help when you rearrange
4. Try the same game a few different ways to see which version fits your space best

Challenge 5 - Scheduling

With so much to do each day, making movement a regular part of the daily schedule is the fifth challenge in getting after school moving.

Because our programs take place after school, we automatically find ourselves dealing with children who are hungry, tired, wound up or cranky

And as if that weren't enough we are also expected to pack A LOT in to the after school hours...

Jean: One thing that we've heard in interviews that we've done in other work is parents want their kids to spend the time in afterschool doing homework. Parents don't want the kids to come home sweating. Parents want the kids to do well in school and to be safe afterschool but they're not real concerned about the afterschool program being a sort of comprehensive child development program

Ultimately, the incorporation of physical activity into your after school program will support the overall healthy development of your students, even in their school work

Here are some tips for putting more physical activity into your busy after school schedule

1. Try fitting physical activity games in on the way to other activities
2. Post a game schedule so students know what to expect when
3. Keep activities in the same space as much as possible so time isn't wasted moving from one place to another
4. Create a lesson plan for physical activity time to be sure you fit everything in
5. Post information on the importance of physical activity so it is easily available to parents and community members

We've explored challenges that we face in afterschool and ways to confront them head on. Now you're ready to delve into the second part of this training: The Game Guide. Here, you'll find the nuts and bolts of how to get movement into your daily routines.

Thank you for joining us as After School Gets Moving, and for your commitment to the overall healthy development of every child.