

Benefits of Physical Activity

Research overwhelmingly shows that physical activity, both structured and unstructured, has a positive impact on academic performance, classroom engagement and productivity, social-emotional development, physical health, and fitness.^{1,2} Early Childcare and Education (ECE) programs and K-12 schools play a critical role in providing unstructured (e.g., recess, free play) and structured (Physical education (P.E.) teacher-led) physical activity opportunities.

WHERE GEORGIA STANDS

16.4% of youth ages 10-17 are **overweight**.⁴

18% of youth ages 10-17 are **obese**.⁵

Approximately **1 in 4** middle and high school students do not meet the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity.⁶

TERMS TO KNOW¹⁰

Body Mass Index: Found by dividing a person's weight in kilograms by the square height in meters. For children, weight status is determined by using age- and sex-specific percentile for BMI.

Overweight: A BMI at or above the 85th percentile but below the 95th percentile.

Obese: A BMI above the 95th percentile.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS, BY AGE

- 0-12 months: Daily activities with adult⁷
- 12-36 months: At least **30 minutes** unstructured daily, **60 minutes** structured daily⁸
- 6 to 17 years: **60 minutes** or more of physical activity each day.²

IMPACT OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PLAY

Both structured and unstructured movement impact the following areas:

Learning and Academic Performance



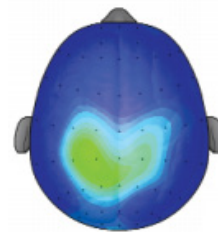
Improved grades and standardized test scores¹¹

Higher recall rate of vocabulary words (compared to those without recess)¹²

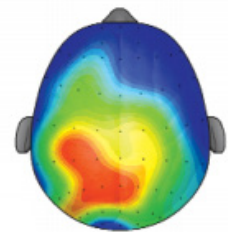


Higher grades for students performing below grade level¹³

Average composite of 20 students' brains taking the same test after sitting quietly or taking a 20 minute walk.



After 20 minutes of **Sitting Quietly**



After 20 minutes of **Walking**

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Classroom Engagement and Productivity



Helping stay on-task in the classroom¹⁴



Decreases inappropriate behaviors, such as distracting other students¹⁵



Promotes executive function growth (e.g., planning, organization, flexibility) among young children¹⁶

IMPACT OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PLAY, CONT.

Social and Emotional Development



Increases opportunity for development of social, intrapersonal, and communication skills, especially for young children^{17, 18}



Increases brain development in areas associated with attention, information processing, storage, retrieval, coping, and positive affect¹⁹



Promotes self-regulation and fosters coping techniques among young children^{20, 21}

Physical Health and Fitness



Increases opportunity for development of cognitive and motor skills²²



Builds strong bones and muscles²³



Reduces the risk of developing health conditions (e.g., heart disease, Type 2 diabetes)²⁴

Win for Georgia's Kids

In 2022, with the signing into law of House Bill 1283, Georgia took important steps to safeguard recess for students. House Bill 1283:²⁵

- Ensures that Georgia's kindergarten through fifth grade students have access to recess
- Encourages schools to provide an average of 30 minutes a day

Recommendations

- Ensure that neither physical activity nor recess opportunities are withheld for disciplinary reasons
- Design built environments utilizing elements that encourage physical activity for youth and adults
- Increase access to afterschool and summer learning programs that support healthy and active lifestyles through opportunities for formal and informal physical activity and recreation

Sources for Benefits of Physical Activity

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