

# What are the benefits of students participating in regular physical activity?

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## Engagement

Physical activity increases blood flow and nutrients to essential areas of the brain that stimulate learning. This enhances cognitive functioning, attention and memory. Physical activity also stimulates the release of adrenaline which improves attention and enables children to become alert and ready to learn.<sup>1</sup>

## Skill development

Participation in physical activity provides students with opportunities to develop movement skills and feel a sense of achievement. Participating with others can help students develop their skills in self-regulation, problem solving, leadership and decision making.<sup>4,14,15</sup>

## Health outcomes

Physical activity improves physical fitness, sleep, mental health and wellbeing, bone and functional health and contributes to maintaining a healthy weight.<sup>2,5</sup>

## Academic performance

Academic achievement improves with physical activity and may boost standardised test scores, even when time is removed from the academic timetable. Students who are physically active are more likely to achieve than those who are sedentary.<sup>4,6,7,11,12,13</sup>

## Wellbeing



Participation in physical activity helps students to feel more confident, happy and relaxed. Active students are more connected to their school which can improve their sense of fair play, their resilience and ability to develop and maintain positive friendships.<sup>9,10</sup>

## References

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- <sup>2</sup> Centre for Population Health, 2013, *NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy 2013-2018*, page 16.
- <sup>3</sup> Shephard RJ 1997, *Curricular Physical Activity and Academic Performance*, *Pediatric Exercise Science* 9, p 119.
- <sup>4</sup> Martin, Dr K 2010, *Brain Boost: Sport and physical activity enhance children's learning*, School of Population Health, The University of Western Australia
- <sup>5</sup> World Health Organisation 2014, *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*, <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/pa/en/>
- <sup>6</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 2011. *Health Policy Snapshot- Childhood Obesity*.
- <sup>7</sup> Buscemi J, Kong A, Fitzgibbon ML, Pate RR, Wilson DK, *Society of Behavioural Medicine Position Statement: School-based physical activity improves academic achievement*. Society of Behavioural Medicine, Better Health Through Behaviour Change. May 2014.
- <sup>8</sup> Executive Overview, *Putting Sport and Physical Activity Back into Education*, The Future of Sport in Australia, Australian Government, Independent Sport Panel. 2010
- <sup>9</sup> Government of Western Australia, *Benefits of physical activity for your children: Active Parent Education Kit Fact Sheet 1*. <http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au/benefits-of-physical-activity-for-your-children>, accessed 2014
- <sup>10</sup> NSW Premier's Council for Active Living 2010, *Why active living statement: A health, economic, environmental and social solution*. Sydney, Australia.
- <sup>11</sup> Coe DP et al. 2006, *Effect of physical education and activity levels on academic achievement in children*. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*. 38,1515-1519.
- <sup>12</sup> Nelson et al. 2006. *Physical activity and sedentary behavior patterns are associated with selected adolescent health risk behaviors*. *Pediatrics* 117,1281-1290
- <sup>13</sup> Dwyer T et al. 2001, *Relation of academic performance to physical activity and fitness in children*. *Pediatric Exercise Science*,13, 225-237.
- <sup>14</sup> Lubans, D. R., Morgan, P. J., Cliff, D. P., Barnett, L. M., & Okely, A. D. 2010, *Fundamental movement skills in children and adolescents: Review of associated health benefits*. *Sports Medicine*. 40, 1019-1035.
- <sup>15</sup> QLD Department of Communities Sport and Recreation 2014, *Why get active?* Accessed 13/08/14, from <http://www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/get-active/why.html>

**The NSW Premier's Sporting Challenge includes a range of initiatives with one common purpose - to have more students, more active, more of the time! The Challenge aims to engage young people in sport and physical activity and encourages them to lead healthy, active lifestyles.**

<https://online.det.nsw.edu.au/psc/home.html>