



State of North Carolina  
Department of Health and Human Services

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**“Move More: NC’s Recommended Standards for Physical Activity  
in School” Unveiled:**

*What schools can do to increase physical activity and improve the health of North  
Carolina’s children*

**RALEIGH**—“Move More: North Carolina’s Recommended Standards for Physical Activity in School” were unveiled Friday, August 26, at Carroll Middle School in Raleigh.

The “Move More School Standards” provide recommendations on ways students, families, principals, teachers, school staff, school board members, superintendents and community leaders can make school a place that supports and encourages physical activity and physical education. Students need both physical activity throughout the day *and* physical education classes to adopt and maintain an active lifestyle.

The “Move More School Standards” were jointly released by the N.C. Division of Public Health, N.C. Department of Public Instruction, N.C. Healthy Schools and N.C. Cooperative Extension Service. These organizations collaborated to develop the “Move More School Standards,” a companion to the “Eat Smart School Standards” released in May 2004.

North Carolina, like other states, is experiencing an epidemic of childhood obesity. Between 1995 and 2004, the prevalence of overweight in North Carolina’s children increased 65.3 percent in 2- to 4-year-olds, 62.2 percent in 5- to 11-year-olds and 19.8 percent in 12- to 18-year-olds. The primary causes of premature death and disability among North Carolinians — heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes — are directly linked to poor food choices and sedentary lifestyles, which also cause obesity.

Many factors contribute to obesity, so combating the problem involves action in many different areas of children’s lives. Children spend most of their waking hours in school. That’s why national and state level health and school officials believe that making changes in school policy around healthy eating and physical activity can have a positive impact on the development of lifelong healthy habits in children.

“Quality physical education programs and physical activity during the school day are cornerstones for developing healthy active lifestyles,” said State Board of Education Chairman Howard Lee. “The State Board of Education supports increased physical activity as part of the school day, and we recognize the benefits that this behavior can generate, not only with regard to health and wellness of our students, but to the positive impact it will have on student learning.”

(MORE)



According to 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results, only half of North Carolina middle school children reported getting at least 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity and only one-fourth reported getting at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. Children of all ages need from 60 minutes to several hours of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day, and they need to avoid prolonged periods of inactivity.

“Right now, North Carolina’s children and youth are falling far short of these recommendations,” said Dr. Leah Devlin, State Health Director. “Increased physical activity in school benefits students, the school and the community by improving academic performance as well as reducing the risk for excess weight gain and other chronic health conditions that can affect them for the rest of their lives,” Devlin added.

School physical education classes is one way children can accumulate minutes of physical activity and get support and guidance on being physically active, yet this is another area where North Carolina children fall short of national averages. The 2003 YRBS found that only 47.3 percent of high school students attend a physical education class at least one day per week in North Carolina. The national average is 55.7 percent.

The “Move More School Standards” define quality standards for physical education and physical activity. They also describe three categories—“needs improvement”, “minimum standard” and “superior standard”—for evaluating physical education and physical activity in schools.

For example, to achieve the superior standard for physical education, schools must provide 150 minutes of physical education for elementary school students in classes where one teacher instructs no more than 25 students. To ensure a quality program, schools would also provide pre- and post-physical fitness tests to help teachers and students measure progress toward individual fitness goals.

In order to meet the superior standard for physical activity, schools must provide more than the minimum 30 minutes each day of physical activity that is now required by the Healthy Active Children policy adopted by the N.C. State Board of Education in April, 2005. In addition, 75 percent or more of all classroom teachers should receive training in the skills needed to incorporate physical activity into instructional time.

“Physical activity is an important component of good health for all persons, regardless of age or ability,” said Dr. Jon Ort , N.C. Cooperative Extension Service director. “Daily physical activity is critical for children’s physical, mental and social development from infancy into adulthood.”

Though the implementation of the “Move More School Standards” is voluntary, local education agencies can use the recommendations to craft physical activity policies that will contribute to students’ well being and health. The “Move More School Standards” are posted on the Web at [www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com](http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com), [www.ncpublicschools.org](http://www.ncpublicschools.org) and [www.nchealthyschools.org](http://www.nchealthyschools.org).

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