

Move More:

A Toolkit for Promoting Open Use of School Property in North Carolina



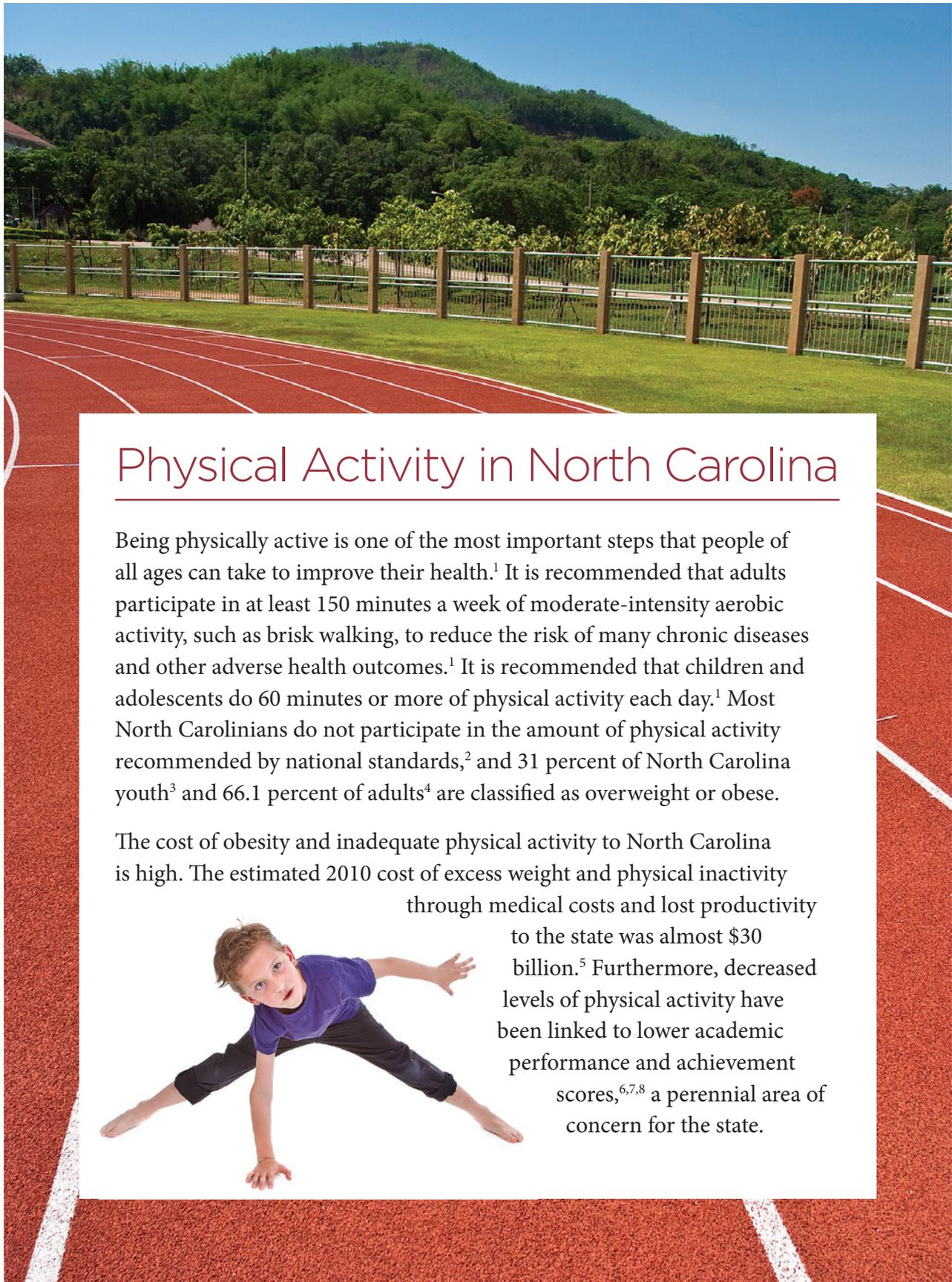


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Move More: A Toolkit for Promoting Open Use of School Property in North Carolina provides information on how schools in North Carolina can make their facilities available to the public for physical activity. It includes background information on the importance of increasing access to places for physical activity, relevant North Carolina law, a checklist for developing open use policies and a list of resources that support open use. The Toolkit is intended to be used by anyone who wants to work with schools in his or her community to create more places for physical activity.





Physical Activity in North Carolina

Being physically active is one of the most important steps that people of all ages can take to improve their health.¹ It is recommended that adults participate in at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, to reduce the risk of many chronic diseases and other adverse health outcomes.¹ It is recommended that children and adolescents do 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day.¹ Most North Carolinians do not participate in the amount of physical activity recommended by national standards,² and 31 percent of North Carolina youth³ and 66.1 percent of adults⁴ are classified as overweight or obese.

The cost of obesity and inadequate physical activity to North Carolina is high. The estimated 2010 cost of excess weight and physical inactivity through medical costs and lost productivity

to the state was almost \$30 billion.⁵ Furthermore, decreased levels of physical activity have been linked to lower academic performance and achievement scores,^{6,7,8} a perennial area of concern for the state.



Access to Places for Physical Activity: The Role of Schools

One of the recommended strategies for increasing physical activity is to increase the number of places available for people to be active.⁹ Schools are well-suited to provide access to physical activity opportunities for local residents. Schools are often centrally located within communities and are generally perceived to be safe environments.⁹ Furthermore, schools typically have recreational infrastructure on their properties, such as playgrounds, fields, tracks and courts, paid for by taxpayer dollars. In rural areas, schools may contain the only facilities available for physical activity.¹⁰ In urban communities, schools offer opportunities for physical activity in the midst of barriers including traffic, crime and the lack of alternative recreational space.¹⁰ In suburban communities, schools can furnish physical activity opportunities in environments that are geographically dispersed and lack a community center.¹⁰

The *Healthy North Carolina 2020: A Better State of Health* report from the North Carolina Institute of Medicine recommends joint use of school facilities as a strategy to prevent and reduce obesity.¹¹ Moreover, *North Carolina's Plan to Address Obesity: Healthy Weight and Healthy Communities 2013-2020*, calls for increases in community use of school facilities for personal exercise or recreation.¹²

Increasing access to school grounds for recreation not only benefits the community, but it may result in a number of benefits to schools. Allowing community access to school facilities can strengthen taxpayer support for government expenditures on school infrastructure and improvements, including the support of residents without school-age children.⁹ In addition, some businesses and foundations may contribute funds, equipment and resources to schools with the expectation that the entire community will benefit. For example, both the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust and the non-profit organization KaBOOM! have funded playground improvements at North Carolina schools with the condition that the playgrounds be open to the broader community after hours. There may also be a benefit of decreased vandalism when school grounds are under the scrutiny of community members who are using them for recreation. Ultimately, shared use of school facilities can help integrate schools into the fabric of the community and increase goodwill between school systems and local residents.



Laws on Non-School Use of School Property in North Carolina

The North Carolina legislature has long recognized the value of promoting community access to school facilities. In 1955, the General Assembly passed a law giving school boards the power to allow community use of school buildings for non-school purposes,¹³ and in 1963 it gave liability protection to school boards that allowed outside groups to use school buildings.¹⁴

In 1992, the law was changed to broaden the type of property schools were allowed to open to the community beyond “buildings” to “real and personal property, except for school buses.”¹⁵ In other words, schools were authorized to allow non-school groups the use of both buildings and grounds. The 1992 amendment also gave schools the power to enter into “agreements” with outside groups for the use of school property and gave liability protection to school boards for injuries occurring as a result of use pursuant to those agreements.¹⁵

After the 1992 amendment, it was clear that non-school groups could access school property by entering into agreements with schools, but it was less clear whether the public could access school grounds in a more unstructured manner for recreation.¹⁶ In a move that answered this question, the legislature amended the law in 2015 to specify that school boards can “make outdoor school property available to the public for recreational purposes” and gave liability protection to school boards for injuries occurring out of such use.¹⁷ [See N.C. General Statute § 115C-524(d) in Appendix A.]

This change in the law clarified that non-school use of school property can fall into two categories:

- First, schools can enter into *agreements with groups* to allow them to reserve use of *indoor and outdoor property*, often for a fee (e.g., the YMCA rents indoor and outdoor space at the school to run an after-school program or summer day camp; a church rents the auditorium to conduct worship services on Sundays; a soccer league rents fields for practices and games in the evenings and on weekends).
- Second, schools can allow the *general public* use of *outdoor property* in an *unorganized or informal manner* for recreation without charge (e.g., a family plays on the playground after school; an adult uses a high school running track on the weekends). This type of use has come to be known as *open use*.

As stated above, the legislature has given school boards *liability protection* for injuries arising out of use of school property in both of the above categories—1) agreements and 2) open use.

Key Terms

SHARED USE

A general term describing the situation where an institution or organization (such as a school or faith-based organization) allows people outside that institution or organization to use its property, typically in a recreational context. There are several forms of shared use, including open use and joint use agreements.

OPEN USE

A form of shared use whereby an institution allows the general public to use its property for recreation without charge and without a contractual agreement with another entity. An institution can create a written **open use policy** to set the terms by which the public is allowed to use its property for recreation. In practice, open use often occurs through informal means with no written policies in place.

JOINT USE AGREEMENTS

A form of shared use whereby an institution enters into a written agreement (i.e., contract) with another institution, group or governmental entity to share its facilities in a specified manner. The agreement may cover a group's one-time use of school property, or it may cover the group's ongoing use over time.

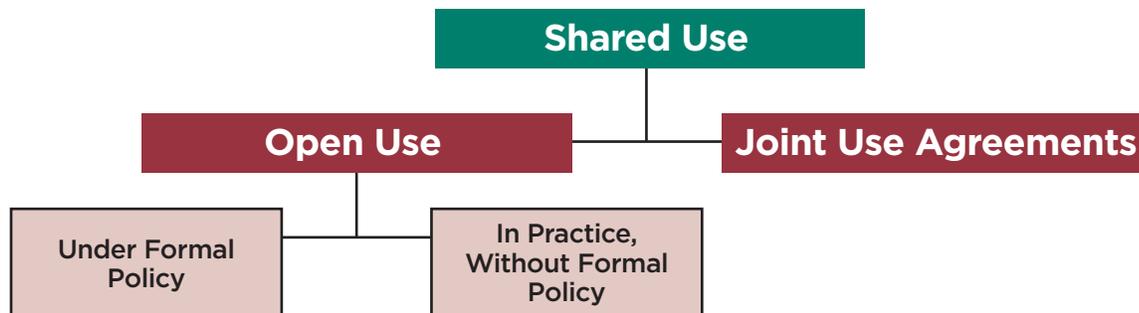
NOTE: The expression "joint use agreement" is used differently by different people. Some people call any contract with a school to use its space a joint use agreement. Others call only complex contracts between schools and city/county governments joint use agreements, and choose to call simpler agreements something different—such as community use of facilities agreements. The label given to a contract is not important; the important distinction is whether a written contract with the school exists or not.

COMMUNITY USE OF FACILITIES POLICY

A policy implemented by an institution such as a school board or a faith-based organization that specifies the conditions under which it will allow outside groups or individuals to use its space. The policy often specifies the terms under which it will enter into agreements or contracts for use of its space (including rental fees). The policy may also contain a provision allowing open use of its property under specified conditions.



Shared Use Framework



Policy Mechanisms to Achieve Shared Use of School Property

When schools enter into agreements with groups to reserve school space, and when schools allow open use of school grounds to the general public for informal recreation, both scenarios are part of a broader category known as **shared use**. We will now look at the policy mechanisms that can be used to achieve shared use in North Carolina schools.

Most North Carolina school districts currently have in place a **Community Use of Facilities** policy. This policy typically lays out the district's requirements for groups wishing to enter into an agreement with a school to use indoor or outdoor property at a reserved time, including fee and insurance requirements. By contrast—since the ability of schools to allow open use was only recently formally recognized by the legislature—most schools have no written policies addressing open use of their grounds at the time of this toolkit's publication.

There are two ways a school board could choose to formalize an open use policy:

- **First, a school board could *add language to its existing Community Use of Facilities policy* to clarify that open use of outdoor recreational areas is allowed when it is not otherwise in use by school groups or by non-school groups that have entered into agreements to reserve the space. The policy language could set specifications for the days and times facilities are available, the types of facilities that are available, and the activities that are permitted or not permitted (such as the possession of tobacco products or weapons).**

In this manner, the North Carolina Schools Boards Association (NCSBA) has amended its model Community Use of Facilities policy (5030) and accompanying Administrative Regulation (5030-R) to include specifications for open use. These models are available to school boards that subscribe to the NCSBA's policy and administrative regulations services.

- **Second, a school board could *create a stand-alone policy dealing only with open use*. This policy would list the same sort of specifications listed above, such as which facilities are included and the terms of use.**

A national public health law organization called ChangeLab Solutions has created a stand-alone "Model Open Use Policy for School Districts," available at <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/open-use-school-districts> and included in Appendix B.

School boards should consult with their attorneys to make decisions about how to best set forth a written policy regarding open use for their school districts.

Checklist for Developing an Open Use Policy

Identify and Engage Stakeholders

- Create a list of stakeholders to include in discussions on creating an open use policy; consider which perspectives would be helpful for your particular district and community:
 - School district leadership and administrators, including school board members, school board attorneys, facilities managers, principals and other school staff
 - School Health Advisory Councils
 - Parent Teacher Associations or Organizations
 - Local parent groups
 - Student groups
 - Local Smart Start affiliates
 - Child care providers
 - Afterschool and summer learning programs
 - Faith communities
 - School neighbors (including those without school-age children)
 - Health department or other public health liaisons
 - Parks and recreation departments
 - Public Safety representatives
 - YMCAs or other community groups interested in promoting physical activity
 - Foundations and businesses that may be willing to contribute money and/or labor to school grounds improvements
- Create an open use or shared use task force or committee with stakeholder members
- Determine who will lead and conduct the Community Assessment, Policy Development and Implementation, Promotion and Evaluation activities listed below

Community Assessment

- Determine the current status of open use in the school district
 - Is there a written policy?
 - Check the school system's website; often there is a tab for the school board on the school system home page; on the school board page of the website, there will be a link to school board policies; often the Community Use of Facilities policy can be found in the Community Relations section (or similarly titled section)
 - If there is no written policy, is open use occurring as a matter of practice?
 - Are children using school playgrounds during non-school hours?
 - In what ways are community members using school grounds for recreation?
 - What signage is currently displayed on school grounds (e.g., "no trespassing" signs) and what message is the community receiving?
 - Is there interest in creating a written open use policy?

Checklist for Developing an Open Use Policy, continued

- Determine whether there is an unmet need for recreational facilities in the community
 - What recreational resources currently exist in the community?
 - Engage in discussions with the parks and recreations department and other physical activity stakeholders
- Conduct an inventory of school facilities to determine scope of available facilities and their appropriateness for open use

Policy Development and Implementation

- Give presentations to district leadership
 - Explain the connection between opportunities for physical activity, health and academic achievement
- Determine whether policy will apply district-wide to all schools or whether policy will differ by school; if there are differences at the school level, who is the ultimate decision-maker for each school's policy?
- Work with school board attorney, facilities managers and other appropriate district personnel to craft policy language
- Work with school board to make any needed adjustments and adopt policy
- Create an implementation plan (see Promotion and Evaluation)

Promotion

- Create and post signs on school grounds to share policy
- Send letters to school families about new policy
- Announce policy change through press releases, social media and other targeted communication channels
- Pitch a story about the policy change to local newspapers and radio stations
- Create a webpage that lists open use resources in the school district; link to other organizations' webpages
- Find opportunities for public/private partnership with local businesses that wish to contribute to school grounds improvements or to signage
- Work with local organizations or groups to create activities to engage families in using the space for active play, such as walking clubs and playgroups

Evaluation

- Periodically assess both school district and community experiences with the policy
- Observe the number of users and types of use
- Determine whether any changes to the policy or its promotion need to be made

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13. House Bill 177, Chapter 1372, 1955.

14. House Bill 9, Chapter 253, 1963.

15. House Bill 1340, Chapter 900, 1991.

16. North Carolina Division of Public Health. 2014. Shared Use of School Property in North Carolina: The Role of Unorganized Recreation. North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Raleigh, NC. Retrieved September 11, 2015 from www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/SharedUseSchoolProperty/Texts/Shared%20Use%20of%20School%20Property%20in%20North%20Carolina%20FINAL.pdf.

17. Session Law 2015-64, Senate Bill 315.





Appendices

A Additional Resources

B North Carolina Shared Use Statute, §115C-524 (amended in 2015)

C ChangeLab Solutions' Model Open Use Policy for School Districts

D Open Use Fact Sheet

E Case Study



APPENDIX A: Additional Resources

Active Living Research

[http://activelivingresearch.org/search/site?f\[0\]=im_taxonomy_vocabulary_6%3A229](http://activelivingresearch.org/search/site?f[0]=im_taxonomy_vocabulary_6%3A229)

Active Routes to School

www.communityclinicalconnections.com/ActiveRoutes

American Heart Association, Voices for Healthy Kids

www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@adv/documents/downloadable/ucm_464685.pdf

ChangeLab Solutions

www.changelabsolutions.org/shared-use

www.changelabsolutions.org/open-use

www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/fair-play

Eat Smart Move More North Carolina: Shared Use Policies and Agreements

www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/SharedUsePoliciesAndAgreements/SharedUsePoliciesAndAgreements.html

Kaboom!

<https://kaboom.org>

Natural Learning Initiative

<http://naturalearning.org>

North Carolina Healthy Schools, Department of Public Instruction

www.nchealthyschools.org

Public Health Law Center

<http://publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/healthy-eating/shared-use-school-property>

Safe Routes to School National Partnership, Shared Use Task Force

<http://saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/101/shared-use/shared-use-task-force>



APPENDIX B: North Carolina Shared Use Statute

§ 115C-524. Repair of school property; use of buildings for other than school purposes.

a. Repair of school buildings is subject to the provisions of G.S. 115C-521(c) and (d).

b. It shall be the duty of local boards of education and tax-levying authorities, in order to safeguard the investment made in public schools, to keep all school buildings in good repair to the end that all public school property shall be taken care of and be at all times in proper condition for use. It shall be the duty of all principals, teachers, and janitors to report to their respective boards of education immediately any unsanitary condition, damage to school property, or needed repair. All principals, teachers, and janitors shall be held responsible for the safekeeping of the buildings during the school session and all breakage and damage shall be repaired by those responsible for same, and where any principal or teacher shall permit damage to the public school buildings by lack of proper discipline of pupils, such principal or teacher shall be held responsible for such damage: Provided, principals and teachers shall not be held responsible for damage that they could not have prevented by reasonable supervision in the performance of their duties.

c. Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 115C-263 and 115C-264, local boards of education may adopt rules and regulations under which they may enter into agreements permitting non-school groups to use school real and personal property, except for school buses, for other than school purposes so long as such use is consistent with the proper preservation and care of the public school property. No liability shall attach to any board of education or to any individual board member, for personal injury suffered by reason of the use of such school property pursuant to such agreements.

d. Local boards of education may make outdoor school property available to the public for recreational purposes, subject to any terms and conditions each board deems appropriate, (i) when not otherwise being used for school purposes and (ii) so long as such use is consistent with the proper preservation and care of the outdoor school property. No liability shall attach to any board of education or to any individual board member for personal injury suffered by reason of the use of such school property.

(1955, c. 1372, art. 15, s. 9; 1957, c. 684; 1963, c. 253; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 975, s. 23; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 900, s. 79(a), 2015-64, s.1.)

APPENDIX C: ChangeLab Solutions' Model Open Use Policy for School Districts

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NOTE: This model policy includes both indoor and outdoor school property and when used in North Carolina will need to be modified to include only outdoor property in accordance with North Carolina law.

Board Policy XX: Open Use of District Recreational Facilities

The [insert name of school board] (“Board”) acknowledges that district facilities are a public resource funded by taxpayers in this community. Board further acknowledges that children and families in [insert name of town or city located in] desire greater access to recreational space for play and exercise. [Insert name of state and cite to state statute] state law allows school buildings and grounds, when not in use for school purposes, to be used for public educational and recreational activities. It is the policy of [insert name of school district] (“District”) to allow community members to use Open Use Facilities, as defined below, for recreational purposes when such use does not interfere with school programs and activities.

OPEN USE FACILITIES

This policy shall apply to (1) the outdoor portions of all District facilities and grounds, including [tracks and fields, playgrounds, and outdoor sports facilities] (“Outdoor Open Use Facilities”) and (2) indoor school facilities suitable for recreational use, including [gymnasiums, hallways, multi-purpose rooms, and locker rooms] (“Indoor Open Use Facilities”). Outdoor Open Use Facilities and Indoor Open Use Facilities are collectively referred to as “Open Use Facilities.”

COMMENT on defining “Open Use Facilities”

The definition of Open Use Facilities included here is fairly broad and includes both indoor and outdoor facilities. Defining and clarifying which district facilities will be open and accessible to the community is a key step in developing an Open Use Policy.

Outdoor facilities may include playgrounds; basketball courts; tennis courts; multi-use black top areas; tracks; baseball fields; football fields; soccer fields; multi-use playing fields; and school gardens. Indoor facilities may include gymnasiums; weight rooms; locker rooms; multi-purpose rooms; and even swimming pools. The logistics of providing access to indoor facilities can be complicated, requiring access, activation of heating or air conditioning systems, and management of equipment usage. An Open Use Policy that includes indoor facilities will require more detailed information on how community members will access those facilities.

School districts can choose to provide access to all facilities that fit into a certain category (e.g., all elementary school playgrounds and basketball courts) or only to certain named facilities (e.g., playgrounds at ABC Elementary School and basketball courts at XYZ Middle School). Regardless of its approach, a school district should ensure that the Open Use Policy and communications to the community (including signage) about the policy clearly identify which facilities are accessible.

OPEN USE HOURS AND PRIORITY

The District shall be entitled to the exclusive use of all Open Use Facilities for school and school-related educational and recreational activities, including before- and after-school programs, summer school, and, at such other times as Open Use Facilities are being used by the District or its agents.

When not in use by the District, Open Use Facilities shall be made available to community members at no cost for play and exercise as follows: (a) Monday through Friday, between the hours of [6:30 *am* and 8:30 *am*] and [4:00 *pm* until *dusk*]; and, (b) Saturday, Sunday, and school holidays, between the hours of [6:30 *am* and *dusk*]. For the purposes of this policy, these times will be referred to as “Open Use Hours.”

COMMENT on “Open Use Hours and Priority”

The Open Use Hours provided here are extensive and include times both before and after school and on weekends and holidays. Determining the exact Open Use Hours will require a careful examination of when and how the District currently uses the Open Use Facilities. School districts can set different Open Use Hours for different Open Use Facilities. While Open Use Hours can be scheduled more easily for times when school is not in session, Districts and communities are also encouraged to consider strategies for allowing community members to access appropriate Open Use Facilities throughout the school day and week.

PARKING

During Open Use Hours, the District shall make parking lots at Open Use Facilities available at no cost to community members using Open Use Facilities.

COMMENT on “Parking”

This provision on parking may not be appropriate for all school districts, particularly urban districts with limited parking availability and easy access for community members who are walking, biking, or taking public transportation to the facilities.

RESTROOMS

During Open Use Hours, the District shall make restrooms at Open Use Facilities available at no cost to community members using Open Use Facilities.

COMMENT on “Restrooms”

This provision on restrooms may not be appropriate for all school districts or all Open Use Facilities. Allowing access to restrooms is more likely to be feasible either for Indoor Open Use Facilities or when restrooms can be accessed by users directly from Outdoor Open Use Facilities without entering the school building.

PERMITTED USES

Community members may utilize Open Use Facilities during Open Use Hours for play and exercise.

PROHIBITED USES

The following are not permitted in Open Use Facilities:

- a. smoking or use of any tobacco-related products;
- b. alcoholic beverages;
- c. drugs or illegal substances;
- d. firearms or weapons; and
- e. other use or activity otherwise prohibited by law.

COMMENT on “Prohibited Uses”

The prohibited uses listed can be modified to meet each community’s needs. They could also include pets, except service animals; glass containers; entering closed areas; motorized vehicles, except wheelchairs; plant removal; or any other provisions that suit the needs of the district. If other policies or agreements address prohibited uses (including existing Community Use of Facilities Policies), school districts may want to duplicate those here (as appropriate) to help ensure understanding by community members of what is and is not allowed.

SIGNAGE

District shall post signs at each school with Open Use Facilities that shall provide public notice of the Open Use Hours and the rules pertaining to Open Use Facilities.

COMMENT on “Signage”

Posting signs at Open Use Facilities that clearly state Open Use Hours and pertinent rules is important for communicating rules and expectations to users. School districts may be able to partner with local health departments, grantmakers, or businesses to find funds to pay for new signage.

LIMITED LIABILITY

[Insert name of state and cite to state statute] law limits the liability of school districts, school boards, and school officials. Access to Open Use Facilities is limited to the recreational use and enjoyment of community members.

COMMENT on “Limited Liability”

This provision provides sample language only; school districts should consult with their legal counsel to develop language that accurately reflects their state’s law on school district liability. It is important to note that including a provision on liability in an Open Use Policy does not change the district’s liability under state law, it merely serves as a statement of existing applicable law.

EVALUATION

District shall develop criteria and components for an evaluation and assessment of this Policy, in particular, the level of utilization by community members and the impact on Open Use Facilities.

COMMENT on “Evaluation”

Districts are encouraged to formally assess and evaluate the success and impact of their Open Use Policy. Areas of evaluation could include level of utilization of Open Use Facilities; demographics of users of Open Use Facilities; common activities during Open Use Hours; any impact of Open Use on the maintenance of facilities; and school site support for Open Use. The evaluation and assessment can help districts plan and allocate resources as well as build support for Open Use.



APPENDIX D: Open Use Fact Sheet

Open Use of North Carolina School Property for Recreation

WHAT IS “OPEN USE” OF SCHOOL PROPERTY?

Open use occurs when a school allows the general public to use its facilities (such as playgrounds, fields, tracks and/or courts) for free when they are not otherwise being used for school purposes. Families playing on school playgrounds and people jogging on their neighborhood school track after school hours, for example, are benefitting from “open use” of school property.

IS OPEN USE ALLOWED IN NORTH CAROLINA?

In 2015, the North Carolina legislature passed a law clarifying that school districts are permitted to open their outdoor facilities to the general public for recreation and that they have liability protection if they do so. It is up to each school board to decide whether and under what conditions to allow open use of their schools’ grounds.

WHY WOULD A SCHOOL DISTRICT WANT TO ALLOW OPEN USE?

Open use has the potential to:

- Increase students’ physical activity levels, which are associated with improved academic performance
- Integrate schools into the fabric of the community
 - Provide a benefit to taxpayers who do not have school-age children
 - Build ties between schools and families
 - Build partnerships with and enhance the mission of community partners
- Leverage the support of the private sector for improvements of school grounds

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT OPEN USE?

Visit www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/School.html, where you can find *Move More: A Toolkit for Promoting Open Use of School Property in North Carolina*. This toolkit explains North Carolina law regarding public use of school property and the mechanisms for establishing open use policies, and it provides a checklist for community stakeholders to use in creating an open use policy.

APPENDIX E: Case Study

Case Study: Down East Partnership Paves Pathways to Healthy, Playful Communities

Founded in 1993, the Down East Partnership for Children (DEPC) is dedicated to launching every child in Edgecombe and Nash counties as a healthy lifelong learner by the end of third grade. To achieve this objective, DEPC



“Inside, outside, 365 days a year, we are working to make active learning the culture of our community.”

—Henrietta Zalkind,
Executive Director, Down
East Partnership for Children

employs a holistic, strength-based approach in the delivery of its service model for children and families.

Recognizing the relationship between child health and academic success, DEPC formed the Healthy Kids Collaborative (HKC) in 2009, with a primary goal of reducing obesity rates in these eastern North Carolina counties. Staff from DEPC facilitated community-level planning and networking groups, bringing together

county government officials, school and corporate leadership, faith-based organizations and other stakeholders, including health professionals and parents. Years later, HKC continues to thrive, meeting collectively and in subgroups.



An obstacle to good health identified by HKC was a lack of safe, accessible places to play in this largely rural area. HKC determined that revitalizing elementary school playgrounds would provide an affordable, manageable solution to address a significant community need and build upon existing positive relationships with local school systems. With the help of community partners, DEPC launched a design and construction campaign to help renovate five elementary school playgrounds for use as community parks.

To do this, DEPC brought a number of corporations, foundations and community allies to the table. The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Shape NC were instrumental in providing initial funding to help launch HKC and its diverse health-focused strategies. The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust and multiple faith-based and community-based organizations came together in an effort to improve the

APPENDIX E: Case Study, continued

quality of and expand access to places to play, including public school playgrounds. Each of the five model schools developed a school community team which oversaw the design, construction and implementation phases of building the school playgrounds.

Leveraging both public and private playground improvement funds and the commitment of these partners, DEPC helped facilitate discussions between the Edgecombe County Board of Education and Edgecombe County government, eventually leading the two entities to enter into a joint use agreement regarding playground use. These same discussions led the Nash–Rocky Mount Public Schools to broaden its Community Use of Facilities policy to support public use of its school playgrounds during non-school, daylight hours with the hope of improving student health, family engagement and transitions to kindergarten.

HKC members designed a map called “Places to Grow and Play,” an asset that outlined public play spaces, outdoor learning environments, farmers’ markets, arts and crafts centers, museums, libraries and other available recreational facilities spanning the two counties.



The Down East Partnership for Children and the Healthy Kids Collaborative continue to lead community-level efforts to develop sustainable healthy eating and active living policy initiatives and economic development opportunities in Edgecombe and Nash counties. For more information, visit www.depc.org.

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