



BALANCING HEALTH & ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

Real-life challenges...

Homework time takes up the majority of the program. We don't have enough time to offer 30 minutes of physical activity every day.

Academics are the #1 program priority. It's hard to fit in health activities when we're focused on improving reading and math skills.

Parents expect that all homework will be complete when they pick up their kids.

Staff only feel comfortable working with kids on homework and academics.

...and how to overcome them

.....> Incorporate two or three 10-minute physical activity breaks into homework time every day. JAMmin' Minutes & SPARK ASAP games are great and quick ways to get kids up and moving. Also, consider making any down time during arrival and dismissal into active time.

.....> Brain Breaks & Energizers integrate physical activity with academic content in grade-specific lessons. SPARK and Food & Fun include academic concepts in some activities.

.....> Send home a flyer to families explaining the importance of balancing time for both academics and health at your program. You can support families by offering tips on how to set up a good environment for finishing homework at home.

.....> Train staff to conduct activity breaks and frame "academics" more broadly to include health messages. Also, most kids are very active when given time for free play, so teach staff that they don't have to be PE teachers to get kids active!

CHECK OUT THESE GREAT RESOURCES!

- **SPARK** is an evidence-based physical activity and nutrition program for Pre-K to 12th grade.
www.sparkpe.org
- **Energizers** are classroom activities that integrate physical activity with academics.
www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/Energizers/Texts/K-5-Energizers.pdf
- **Brain Breaks** is a physical activity idea book for elementary teachers.
www.emc.cmich.edu/brainbreaks/
- **JAMmin' Minutes** are 1 minute fitness routines kids and staff can do with limited space.
www.jamschoolprogram.com/

NUTRITION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BOOKS

- **Eating the Alphabet**
- **Stone Soup**
- **Johnny and His Mommy**
- **Salt in His Shoes**
- **The Best Way to Play**
- **The Little Red Hen**
- **Bread is for Eating**
- **Berenstain Bears and Too Much Junk Food**
- **I Will Never Not Eat a Tomato**
- **Berenstain Bears & Too Much TV**

Did you know?



BALANCING HEALTH & ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

REINFORCE ACADEMICS WITH FOOD & FUN!

Find all these activities at www.foodandfun.org

Literacy: Help kids practice reading & writing skills with these Food & Fun activities:

- I'm Going on a Picnic (Unit 1)
- Active Day Cartoons extension (Unit 2)
- Track the Trans Fats (Unit 4)
- Healthy Steps (Unit 11)

Foreign languages: A number of Food & Fun extension can help kids learn new languages:

- Fruit & Vegetable Relays (Unit 1)
- Build a Rainbow (Unit 7)
- Build an Activity Wheel (Unit 9)

Math: Kids can practice addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division in these activities:

- Bowling for Sugar Smarts (Unit 3)
- Count It Up (Unit 3)
- Walk Around Town extension (Unit 8)
- Gulp (Unit 10)

Science: You can teach kids basic science lessons with these Food & Fun activities:

- Make Flour (Unit 5)
- Parts of the Plant (Unit 7)
- What Happens When (Unit 9)

CHECK OUT SOME OF THESE SUCCESS STORIES! At a program with limited space for activity, the site director initiated activity breaks when kids started to get restless during tutoring. He'd snap his fingers and kids would stand up for exercises at their desk or a quick walk around the school. A short exercise break helped the tutoring time get back on track.

One program, which has a strong literacy focus, struggled to offer all kids physical activity every day. The site director decided to schedule two 10-minute breaks during homework time in addition to regular free play for kids to stretch and get physically active. He found that the kids loved the chance to move around after a busy day at school and even noticed they seemed to focus better with the chance to let off some steam.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Teaching kids to cook can be a great way to reinforce math skills. See the Food & Fun recipe packet for ideas.
- Free play like recess has been linked with better concentration, attention, classroom conduct, and on-task behavior for students.
- The flow of blood and oxygen to the brain, which affects mental clarity, is improved by physical activity.
- Physical activity also boosts connections between nerves in the brain, which helps kids to process information better and stay focused.