

# SPARK™ and Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs

## A RESOURCE GUIDE

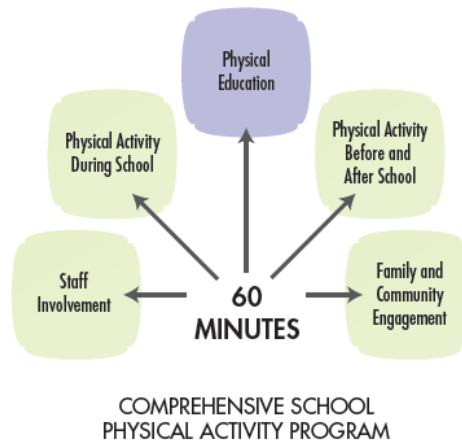
SPARK is a research-based organization dedicated to creating, implementing, and evaluating programs that promote lifelong wellness. SPARK strives to improve the health of children, adolescents, and adults by disseminating evidence-based Physical Education, After School, Classroom Activity Breaks, Early Childhood, and Coordinated School Health programs to teachers and recreation leaders serving Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

This guide focuses on how The SPARK Programs help to achieve the goals of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program](#) (CSPAP).

The goals of a CSPAP are:

- To provide a variety of school-based physical activities to enable all students to participate in 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each day.
- To provide coordination among the CSPAP components to maximize understanding, application, and practice of the knowledge and skills learned in physical education so that all students will be fully physically educated and well-equipped for a lifetime of physical activity.

There are five components of a CSPAP:



### Quality Physical Education

As defined by SHAPE America, a quality physical education program includes opportunities to learn, instruction that is appropriate, content that is meaningful, and assessment of both students and the program itself.

SPARK is the world's most researched and field-tested Physical Education program. Since 1989, SPARK has provided evidence-based curriculum, training, and consultation to over 100,000 teachers and youth leaders, representing many thousands of schools, organizations, and agencies worldwide. Today, over 50 publications have documented positive SPARK effects such as:

#### Increased MVPA (moderate to vigorous physical activity)

- SPARK increases MVPA to over 50% of class-time whether instructed by PE specialists or classroom teachers - and SPARK will consult with you on how to measure it.
- SPARK addresses the National PE Standards (as well as most state standards), aligns assessment with instruction, and regularly promotes out-of-class physical activity.
- SPARK physical education is the only nationally disseminated program that positively affects ALL of these student outcomes: Activity levels, fitness, sport skills, enjoyment, and academic achievement. SPARK is also the only NIH-researched program available providing coordinated curriculum, training, follow up support, and equipment for Pre-K through 12th grade teachers.
- SPARK has been honored as an Exemplary Program of the U.S. Dept. of Education; cited in the Surgeon General's Report as a "School-based solution to our nation's healthcare crisis;" earned a "Governor's Commendation;" and was awarded "Gold" by the Cooper Institute. SPARK is the only program to earn "PE Gold" grades K-8.

- Improved teacher instruction
- Sustainability – A 2005 paper in Research Quarterly shows SPARK’s sustainability/institutionalization.
- SPARK PE Programs include Kinder-2nd Grade, 3rd – 6th Grade, Middle School (6th – 8th Grade), and High School. (To view sample SPARK PE activities, [click here.](#))
- The SPARK Physical Education Objectives include:
  - All students are provided with many opportunities to learn, participate and practice skills
  - Students are involved in MVPA at least 50% of class time
  - Students enjoy physical activity
  - Students are encouraged to participate in physical activity outside of PE
- The SPARK Programs offers a complete scope and sequence from the Early Childhood program through High School Program. (To view SPARK’s scope and sequence, [click here.](#))
- SPARK Physical Education programs include a variety of assessment tools to measure student levels of fitness, motor skills, behavior, and cognitive learning. Assessments are developmentally-appropriate and teacher-friendly. (To view sample Assessments, [click here.](#)) SPARK also includes assessments for teacher quality so teachers can measure their own behaviors as well as percentage of time students are engaged in MVPA (moderate-to-vigorous physical activity) during class time. (To see a sample Lesson Quality Checklist, [click here.](#))



## Physical Activity During School

### Classroom-based Activity

- SPARKabc’s promotes quality, daily physical activity for elementary school students. National guidelines recommend that young people accumulate at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity. With schools at the center of most children’s daily lives, SPARKabc’s provides classroom teachers with the resources needed to help students accumulate at least 30 of the 60 minutes recommended for good health. This effort aligns to the national model for Comprehensive School Physical Activity with two distinct components: Classroom-based Activity and Active Recess.
  - A growing body of evidence suggests that students who are regularly physically active perform better academically. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) provides an in-depth review of the recent articles reporting the effects of school-based physical activity, including Classroom-based Physical Activity and Recess. Within these publications, the following areas were identified within the definition of Academic Performance:
    - Cognitive Skills and Attitudes: Attention/concentration, memory, verbal ability
    - Academic Behaviors: Personal conduct, attendance, time on task, homework completion
    - Academic Achievement: Performance on standardized tests, grades
- To optimize both the health and academic benefits of daily physical activity, SPARKabc’s suggests that each classroom teacher lead at least one 5-minute Classroom ASAP, one 10-minute Academically Focused SPARKabc’s Activity, and 15 minutes of Active Recess (see below) to add a minimum of 30 more minutes of Daily School-based Physical Activity. (To see a sample SPARKabc’s activity, [click here.](#))

### Active Recess

- Both K-2 and 3-6 SPARK PE programs include Recess Activities sections with ideas for active games for students to play during their recess time. (To see a sample Recess activity, [click here.](#)) Sample Yearly Plans show teachers how to integrate these activities into their units to teach the basics before having students play them during recess.
- The SPARKabc’s program includes a recess component to help recess organizers and staff provide the highest quality experience to students while minimizing many of the common challenges that are associated with recess. Well-organized activity choices and consistent management strategies will provide the architecture for a fun, active, and safe recess environment. (To see a sample SPARKabc’s recess activity, [click here.](#))



## Physical Activity Before and After School

SPARK After School (AS) offers participants opportunities to learn, practice and master a wide range of diverse skills and activities appropriate for youth. SPARK's field-tested activities can be implemented in a variety of settings including before and after school programs at schools, at off-site locations such as YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, and community parks and recreations centers. Only activities that produce substantial opportunities for players to actively engage in moving and learning are included. Inactive games and drills, as well as activities requiring specialized equipment and facilities (e.g., gymnastics, aquatics, etc.) were not.

It is expected that SPARK AS participants will:

- Enjoy and seek out physical activity.
- Develop a variety of basic movement and manipulative skills so they will experience success and enjoy physical activity.
- Develop and maintain acceptable levels of physical fitness.
- Develop the ability to get along with others in movement environments (e.g., share space and equipment, be a good sport, and show cooperative behavior).

When SPARK AS organization and management strategies are implemented, leaders learn concepts and methods that teach players:

- Self-responsibility for physical activity programs.
- Goal setting for physical activity and healthy food choices.
- Behavior change techniques and other psychological strategies related to movement experiences and the development of a healthy lifestyle.
- Basic injury prevention and safety during physical activity.
- Strategies for fostering family and peer support for activity programs.
- Strategies for decreasing sedentary behavior (e.g., television viewing and video game playing).
- The relationship between physical activity, food intake, and body composition.
- Application of basic biomechanical and exercise physiology principles. (To see a sample After School activity, [click here](#).)

Home Play Activities are offered in the Kinder-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Grade, Middle School (6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade) physical education programs, as well as in the After School Program. Activities are designed to increase physical activity levels outside of school for students and families. They are 2-sided and can be printed or emailed to students/parents. (To see a sample Home Play activity, [click here](#).)

Home Integrations are offered in all SPARK programs and are found on the backside of lessons. They are short blurbs meant to be read to students to give them ideas for physical activities to do at home or with family and friends. (To see sample Integrations, [click here](#).)



## Family and Community Engagement

Research shows that youth participation in physical activity is influenced by participation and support of parents and siblings. SPARK promotes such participation and support through the above-mentioned Home Play Activities and Home Integrations. Community involvement can be established through groups such as YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, Community and Recreation Centers implementing the SPARK After School Program to increase opportunities for physical activity. (To see a sample Home Play activity, [click here](#) and to see a sample Home Integration, [click here](#).)



## Staff Involvement

School employees play an integral role in a school's CSPAP. School employee wellness programs improve staff health, increase physical activity levels, and are cost effective. When school staff commit to good health practices, they are positive role models for students, and may show increased support for student participation in physical activity. Support for school employee wellness and leadership training contribute to the overall culture of physical activity at a school. Teachers and other school staff members can integrate physical activity into classroom academic instruction and breaks, and support recess, intramurals, and other physical activity offerings. Additionally, school employees can be positive role models for students by demonstrating active lifestyle choices in and out of school.

SPARK provides hands-on training for physical education specialists and classroom teachers alike to implement the SPARK program. (To read testimonials, go to [sparkpe.org](http://sparkpe.org) and click on the yellow "Learn about SPARK" button.) Any and all staff are invited to attend workshops to learn about SPARK and the multiple ways to increase physical activity and promote healthy behaviors throughout the school environment. The SPARK Wellness for Staff program is designed to address "teacher specific" health issues and offer authentic and effective prevention strategies. Healthy children are better learners and teachers who maintain a work/life balance have more energy, sleep better, and serve as healthy lifestyle role models for their students. - See more at: <http://www.sparkpe.org/coordinated-school-health/wellness-for-staff/#sthash.SBfe8w4p.dpuf>. In addition, to enhance Nutrition Services, SPARK has partnered with Healthy Kids Challenge (HKC), a nationally recognized non-profit led by registered dietitians to provide nutrition education materials, on-site teacher training, and follow-up support to schools and after school programs nationwide.

### Coordination of the CSPAP

Each SPARK program provides a coordinated package of:

- Research-based curriculum (the "what to teach")
- On-site teacher training (the "how to teach it")
- Content-matched equipment (the "tools you need to teach")
- Extensive follow up support (because programs must institutionalize to be successful).

Research shows that even the best programs fade away without appropriate coordination and follow-up. SPARK includes follow-up as a vital component of its teacher-training package. A "SPARK Star" is chosen for each school site and/or grade level. With SPARK Stars in place, the school site is helping to ensure the SPARK program is effectively implemented and institutionalized. SPARK Stars are the staff support system for SPARK. In turn, SPARK will serve as their support. By partnering this way SPARK can facilitate significant improvement in the quantity and quality of physical education/physical activity at each site. (To see a sample SPARK Star handout, [click here.](#))