Montana Kids in Motion
Daphne Herling

INTRODUCTION
Data shows that our children in Montana tend to be more physically active than their peers in other states, whether it is at home, in school, in the community or in the outdoors. To many of us who live in Montana, this is intuitively obvious given the culture and access to the outdoors. But what difference does being physically active actually make to children? This issue brief looks at how physical activity in all settings can improve the lives of children; active kids tend to be physically healthier, and more emotionally resilient and mentally acute than their sedentary peers. We report on social issues where often Montana kids fare worse than their peers in other states; but, regarding children engaging in physical activities, we are happy to report that Montana kids are doing well.

This publication was funded in part by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We thank them for their support but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented here are those of the authors alone and may not reflect the opinions of the Foundation.
BACKGROUND

How our children are physically active has undergone massive changes in the past few decades. Our very way of being in the world has dramatically changed and often revolves around digital devices; our mobility is focused on automobiles getting us from point A to point B in the quickest way; children’s activities focus on playing fields rather than woods and trails; and legitimate safety concerns keep children on a tighter leash. What does this mean for children’s opportunity and propensity to get outside and be active?

DATA ON CHILDREN’S ACTIVITY/INACTIVITY

There are many data sources from which to glean information about how children are or are not active and how much time they spend with digital devices. Much of the data revolves around how children’s health, both physical and emotional well-being, is negatively impacted by lack of activity.

The National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH) and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) report on both physical activity and time spent watching TV, playing video games, or on an electronic device. Relative to children nationwide, Montana children are more physically active and spend less time passively looking at screens. This is good news, as we will see when we look at some of the health outcomes associated with more active lifestyles.

According to the 2013 YRBS Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) report, high school kids in Montana are doing very well compared to their national peers in terms of their activity levels and the fewer number of hours they are looking at some type of screen. Table One shows that across the board, on all five measures, the data is positive for our high school students. The first two questions show that more Montana students are physically active and attend more physical education classes in school than their national cohorts, although physical education does not necessarily mean physical activity. High school females in Montana have significantly more participation in activities than do female students nationally, and American Indian students in Montana have the highest participation in PE classes of all our students.

OPI also reports on trends among Montana students for the physical activity questions. The first question from our table (being physically active a total of at least 60 minutes per day on 5 or more of past 7 days) was first asked in 2005. In the five years of data, the percentage of students engaging in physical activity on an average school day has grown from 31.2% to its current 54.8%.

HEALTH CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH INACTIVITY

It is no news to anyone that our national health indicators are not positive. There has been much coverage of diabetes, heart disease, obesity and other associated problems. Many of these problems show a correlation with a lack of physical activity.

Diabetes

As reported by the American Diabetes Association, by 2012, 9.3% American had been diagnosed with diabetes, up from 4.5% in 2000. The prevalence of diabetes in Montana was the same as the national rate (4.5%) in 2000 and increased to 7.7% in 2013. Thus, the rate in Montana rose by approximately one third while the diabetes rate in the country as a whole doubled. Of particular concern is the higher rate of diabetes among American Indian/Alaska Natives in Montana, where the prevalence of diabetes was 15.7% in 2013. Physical activity not only helps prevent diabetes but has also been shown to help manage it.

About 208,000 Americans under age 20 are estimated to have diagnosed diabetes, approximately 0.25% of that age group.
population. Diabetes in children has to be understood within the context of Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is usually diagnosed in children and young adults, and was previously known as juvenile diabetes. Only 5% of people with diabetes have this form of the disease. The single biggest cause of type 2 diabetes in children is extra weight. Once a child gets too heavy, she’s twice as likely to get diabetes.

Heart Disease
There is very little difference between the percentage of Montanan adults who have been told either that they have heart disease or that they have had a heart attack and the percentage of adults nationally who have these diagnoses according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Hypertension affects approximately 29% of the US adult population and 27.7% of the adult population in Montana (age 18 and older). Unfortunately, hypertension in children and adolescents is a growing national health problem. In persons 3 to 18 years of age, the prevalence of hypertension is 3.6%. The combined prevalence of prehypertension and hypertension in adolescents who are obese is greater than 30% in boys and is 23-30% in girls.

Childhood Obesity
Again according to CDC, childhood obesity has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents in the past 30 years. Specifically, the percentage of adolescents aged 12–19 years who were obese increased from 5% to nearly 21% over this time period. And there remain significant disparities among racial groups with Hispanic children being the most at risk (22.4%) followed by African Americans (20.2%). The costs associated with obesity are large and cannot be ignored as we struggle in this country to contain health care expenditures. Based on 2006 data, the annual cost of obesity-related medical treatment is between $147 and $210 billion a year, or nearly 10% of all annual medical spending. Childhood obesity alone is responsible for $14.1 billion in direct costs. Data shows that these expenses are incurred by children across the economic spectrum.

The good news is that nationally for children and adolescents aged 2 – 19, the prevalence of obesity has remained fairly stable for the past decade at about 17% but that still represents about 12.7 million children and adolescents. Other good news is that 74.9% of high school students in Montana are at a healthy weight; nationally, only 66.6% of high school students are at a healthy weight.

**POSITIVE EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**
It is a known fact that physical activity improves overall health; for both adults and children, it improves circulation, increases blood flow to the brain, and raises endorphin levels, which all help to reduce stress and improve mood and attitude. Some studies have shown that physically active students tend to also achieve more academically, and are less likely to miss school, partake in risky behaviors, get pregnant, or attempt suicide.

Getting children to increase their physical activity, whether in school, at home, in their communities or in the great outdoors, is a solution to many of these problems.

A great example of this is Mark, a 20-year-old young man who grew up in a low-income, single-parent family in Missoula, Montana who is very clear about how being active outside helped him. “Being outside helps me focus on what I am doing right now; it lets me see the parts of my life that I need to get rid of. It increases my self-awareness.” Mark’s journey from his urban neighborhood to hiking and backpacking in the surrounding mountains exemplifies why getting kids outside being physically active, participating with others and changing their perspective by engaging with the large-scale natural world can be a life-changing opportunity. From the age of nine, Mark had the opportunity to be
physically active in nature; other children are physically active at home, at school, or in their communities.

**Schools**

Public schools are uniquely placed to help children get active, as our kids spend most of their days during the school year at school. It is a sad fact that nationally only 8% of elementary schools, 6.4% of middle schools, and 5.8% of high schools provide daily physical education to all of their students. Although it is important to note that physical education does not mean only physical activity. In the increasing pressure that schools are under to boost students’ academic scores to comply with national requirements, 20% of all elementary schools have abolished recess in favor of increased classroom time. A 2005 study showed that male students only spend about 18 minutes per day in moderate and vigorous exercise while girls spend even less, 16 minutes per day.

No doubt there are barriers to building more robust physical education programs, especially considering the stress placed on academic test results. There is also the philosophical argument that schools do not have a place in issues that should be addressed by parents. In addition, budget constraints are often noted as a reason for cutting physical education programs; this is particularly true in low-income school districts.

Montana’s Office of Public Instruction requires physical education in grades K-6, but it does not require daily recess. The State also mandates 225+ minutes per week of physical education in grades 7-8 and at the high school level (the nationally recommended amount of time). This does not mean that students spend 3 ¾ hours per week being physically active, as PE includes classroom teaching time for different components. These components include demonstrating the ability to use critical thinking and decision-making to enhance health and demonstrating interpersonal communication skills to enhance health.

It is recommended by the CDC that schools have a physical education policy that requires students to spend at least 50% of physical education time in moderate to vigorous physical activity and that elementary schools have at least 20 minutes a day of recess, preferably outdoors. These are only two of the many recommendations for inclusion in school policies that focus entirely on being physically active.

Let’s Move: Active Schools, a national coalition, has developed resources and program ideas to make it as easy as possible for schools to design and implement programs that
get kids moving. Lewis and Clark Elementary School, through its Let’s Move, Missoula program, has incorporated many physical activity components into the students’ day; Morning Movement creates a place for students to run, dance or do yoga before school starts and Active Recess partners with the local YMCA to engage kids in organized games and activities during the lunch recess. Native American Games teaches grades 2-3 the basics of Double Ball, Shinny, and Stick Game, all traditional games.

**Communities**

What is available to children in their own communities can make a difference to their ability to get out and be active. Being safe walking or biking to school or being able to find a neighborhood park or public space makes a difference. Unlike many children, our “showcased” child, Mark, was fortunate to live in a community where many kids walk or bike to school and he remembers that he would walk or bike the 1½ miles to and from school on most days.

Data from the National Center for Safe Routes shows the decline in the number of children walking or biking to school between 1969 and 2009 (page 4 chart). They have identified many barriers that prevent children from getting to school in an active way: distance, traffic, weather, crime danger, and adverse school policy. However, there are many different approaches communities can take that not only make walking or biking to school safer but actually increase the number of children that do so. Successful programs use a combination

<table>
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<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>RESPONSES FOR ALL GRADES AS PERCENTAGES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>YRBS 2013</strong></td>
<td><strong>US versus MT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically active a total of at least 60 minutes per day on 5 or more of past 7 days</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended physical education (PE) classes on 1 or more days in an average week when in school</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did not participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on any of the past 7 days</td>
<td>15.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watched 3 or more hours per day of TV on average school day</td>
<td>32.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video/computer game/used a computer for other than school work 3 or more hours per day on an average school day</td>
<td>41.3</td>
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Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Montana Office of Public Instruction.
of education, encouragement, enforcement and engineering activities.

Safe Routes to School in Shelby, Montana is an example of such a successful program. Started in 2007, Shelby’s Safe Routes to School program initially addressed infrastructure improvement as their goal, then moved on to encouraging students to walk or bicycle to school. A community-wide effort resulted in receiving a grant to construct sidewalks where they were lacking, build ADA compliant ramps, and connect the alleys to the sidewalk. Then, the Shelby Program instituted Walk ‘n’ Wheel Wednesdays every Wednesday during the fall and spring. Students join a walking school bus led by the mayor, sheriff, or high school athletes. Tallies showed that approximately 60 students who lived within a two mile radius of school walked to school.

There are additional strategies that communities can employ to encourage people to be physically active, from conducting community-wide media campaigns to ensuring that their street-scale urban design and land-use policies are compatible with walkable community concepts. Focusing on infrastructure that encourages people to get outside is a proven way for communities to take a holistic approach to increasing activity levels. Environmental and policy solutions such as safety lighting and air pollution mitigation also affect physical activity levels, regardless of individual motivation and knowledge about the beneficial aspects of being active.

Families

Children in families that are active are more likely to be active themselves and to remain active throughout their lives. Encouraging families to be active is a great way to ensure kids are exposed to the benefits of moving and playing. Having fun together while being active is a great way to spend family time and has far-reaching benefits for wellbeing. The sheer number of websites dedicated to or with suggestions for getting families active is overwhelming; from the CDC to WebMD, from Outside Magazine to Better Homes and Gardens, there is plenty of information out there to motivate and inform parents.

Despite this plentiful information, children’s access to public play space has declined as children’s play time has gone from being primarily outdoors to indoors and supervised. In just two decades, children’s independent mobility has dramatically declined as cars fill up the ever-expanding road system. Lack of access to outdoor play space is particularly true for youth from low-income and minority families who have limited access to greenways, sports fields, and trails that support and encourage physical activity. Such evidence is not surprising, as those with low income and people of color disproportionately live in economically depressed areas with

“It has been my experience that providing access to wild places for youth has a profound impact on their understanding of themselves. It forces them to be real in a way that the civilized world does not. Having the opportunity to strip away the self-made social constructions (mostly worn as a survival strategy), allows students to get in touch with their true selves, often for the first time. Add in a healthy group dynamic, positive and supportive adult mentoring, and experiences just outside their comfort zone, and the result is real empowerment.”

Joshua Lisbon, Mark’s long-time mentor
substandard housing that are less likely to be near to green and natural spaces.

Additionally, when families such as Mark’s are struggling to make ends meet, finding and using this information may well take a low priority. Mark clearly knows he lives in two different worlds: at home where he listens to cars, yelling and the constant noise of city streets, and in nature, where he feels peace as he connects to the sounds and smells in nature, breathes fresh air and sheds the stresses of his life. As he participated in outdoor-focused programs, his life became increasingly stable mainly because of the hard work and dedication of his mother who saw the benefits and made the commitment to his continued participation in the programs.

Structured Sports Activities

Opportunities abound for children to participate in organized sport activities although some parenting experts exhort parents to balance structure with free-play. Additionally, participation in sports activities is often limited by lack of disposable income. Nationwide, the number of children participating in structured outdoor sports activities grew exponentially in the mid-1980s and remained fairly steady until recently when it began to decline. Participation in four popular youth team sports (basketball, soccer, baseball and football) fell among boys and girls aged 6 through 17 by roughly 4% from 2008 to 2012. According to US Youth Soccer, the annual number of registered youth players has stayed around 3 million over the last decade but with slight decreases each year. In 2014, about 5% of Montana’s children were registered with US Youth Soccer; in comparison, a state such as New Jersey has about 7% of 18 and under registered. The causes of declines in youth sports aren’t clear. Experts cite everything from increasing costs to excessive pressure on kids in youth sports to cuts in school physical-education programs.

Outdoor Activities

Opportunities for children to be physically active are not limited to the school yard or the community playing fields. Getting outdoors to ski, bike, climb, hike, hunt or fish is part of the culture in Montana where we are fortunate to have access to 27,378,247 acres of public lands. To Mark, the benefits of getting outside his immediate neighborhood focused on his mental and emotional wellbeing; although, he admits that he is stronger, fitter and physically healthier than he used to be.

Winter Sports

Winter sports in Montana are important ways for children to be active outside, especially given our long winters. Nationally, alpine skiing is the only snow sports activity that has declined in the past five years, declining by about 14%. Comparatively, cross-country skiing has remained steady around 4 million people participating per year. Snowboarding has also remained steady at about 7.5 million participants. In the 2014/15 season, about 8.8% of skiers and snowboarders in Montana were children under the age of 19. A special analysis by the Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research (ITRR) from a 2014 statewide survey showed that about half the children (18 and younger) downhill skied, with almost half of those only going up to 10 times per year. Snowboarding was less popular amongst children with just over 71% never having participated in the sport and cross-country skiing was even less popular with 82% never having participated. The small sample size of this report makes it hard to draw too many conclusions but it does give us a snapshot of snow sports in the state. There are currently Montana 399 kids ages 7 – 22 registered to compete with the U.S. Ski Association. It is important to remember that the expenses incurred in these winter sports do put them out of reach of many of Montana’s families.
Water Sports
There are plenty of opportunities to participate in recreational fun on Montana’s numerous rivers and lakes. And, it is reassuring how many of our children canoe, kayak, raft, water ski, jet ski and paddleboard, thereby getting plenty of physical activity. In the same ITRR report as mentioned above, between 40% (canoeing) and 16% (jet skiing) reported participating in these water sports.

Hunting and Fishing
In Montana, hunting and fishing are important activities, and to many young Montanans, it is a rite of passage that establishes a lifelong connection to getting outside. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issues an annual report in its National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. According to this report, in 2011, 37.4 million people in America participated in hunting and fishing recreation, with many more fishing than hunting. Between 2006 and 2011, there was an 11% increase in the number of anglers and a 9% rise in hunters nationwide. Among children 6 to 15 years old, 1.8 million hunted and 8.5 million fished. In Montana, 57,000 children in this age group fished while 23,000 hunted. Thus, in Montana there is less of a gap in the number of children who hunt compared to those that fish than exists nationally.

Public Lands Usage
So do our families and children in Montana take advantage of our public lands to get outside and be physically active? Public agencies have conducted research and collected robust data on public land usage, making them a good source of surrogate data for families and children’s time outside. Although, this does not necessarily mean they are being physically active when they are outside.

The lack of baseline data on children getting out into public lands led the USDA Forest Service to conduct the National Kids Survey (2007 – 2009) for which 120,000 households were interviewed. The survey included many types of outdoor activities including “nature-based activities”. Overall results show that 62.5% of children are spending two or more hours outdoors on a weekday and 78.2% on a weekend. Less than 5% of children reported spending no time outdoors on either a weekday or a weekend. That’s the good news, the bad news is that nature-based activities are not as common among youth as other alternatives such as organized sports with only 30.7% reporting they did activities such as bird-watching and wildlife viewing and 29% on such activities as hiking, camping and fishing.

Since 1904, the National Park Service has collected numbers of recreational visitors to parks. Between 2013 and 2014, the number of recreational visitors increased by 7%; this might seem like a small increase, but it represents almost 20 million people. July and August are the Park Service’s busiest time of year, when families are vacationing during school holidays. From 2013 to 2014, recreational visitorship during those months increased by 7.2% in July and 6.9% in August. And June 2015 saw the highest monthly number of recreational visitors ever to Yellowstone National Park, 17% higher than in June 2014.

The USDA Forest Service also collects data to track visitors to the National Forests. From 2005 to 2012, the number of visitors to the National Forest System grew by 3%. Youth under age 16 represented 16.8% of visitors during 2008 – 2012, while youth age 16-19 represented 3.5% of the visitors. Interestingly, the Forest Service collects data on recreation visits by household income. The spread shows that, for FY2008 – FY 2012, 11% of visitors had incomes below $25,000, and 23% had incomes between $50,000 and $74,999 showing the increased availability of disposable income to travel as families go up the income ladder.

Montana State Parks likewise collects visitor data
and shows that in the 10-year period from 2005 – 2014, visitorship increased by 29%. In 2014, our State Parks had the most visits in a single year with July and August again being the busiest months. Montana residents make up 81% of visitors to our state parks.

It is encouraging that there is such a steady increase in visitorship to our public lands. Although we cannot be sure what percentage of these are children, we can make a safe assumption that the increase during the summer is at least partially due to families getting out in nature. Also as pointed out about, it does not mean that a visit to a National Park does not necessarily mean they are being active.

Getting children in nature definitely fulfills the “getting them active” goal, but what else might it do? In 2005, Richard Louv wrote his book, The Last Child in the Woods, and coined the term “nature-deficit disorder” to describe the disconnect between children and the outdoors. Since then, his work has sparked an ongoing policy debate and programmatic response, and has brought to the fore a new and growing body of research that shows exposure to nature is essential to positive childhood development. The research on the benefits of children being exposed to and getting out in nature shows that there are cognitive, emotional and mental health benefits, as well as physical benefits. That there are health benefits for children spending time outdoors is intuitively clear; children who are active are healthier. But the benefits go beyond those from playing in constructed playgrounds, in sports arenas, and the like. Children who play together in nature tend to have more positive feelings about each other, and those who regularly have positive personal experiences with the natural world show more advanced motor abilities, including coordination, balance and agility. A remarkable list of cognitive benefits for children who spend time in nature has been shown through peer-reviewed studies and other research endeavors.

In addition, there has been much reliable research on the mental health benefits of connecting with nature. The overarching theme in this research is that children have an increased feeling of wellbeing, and are helped in healing from adverse conditions. Lately, there has been much focus on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which looks at how certain negative experiences in childhood have lasting negative effects for adults. These experiences range from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to parental divorce or the incarceration of a parent or guardian. According to a 2003 study, the stress caused in children can be buffered by exposure to nature. Additionally, time in natural settings with supportive adults may help children cope with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Some promising studies show that symptoms of ADD are relieved after contact with nature.

It is inspiring to listen to Mark talk about his ability to focus when he is in nature and how the lack of distractions allows him to think about what he wants for his future. With great pride, he lists peaks around his hometown of Missoula that he has hiked, especially his annual birthday hike with friends and family up the 9,351 foot Saint Mary Peak in the Bitterroot Mountains. He feels that he has become more self-reliant and aware of himself and his place in the world, and knows that when he doesn’t pull his own weight others are forced to step in. His body has certainly been strengthened but, more importantly, his mind has too.

Mark’s journey into the outdoors began with the Summer Arts & Leadership Camp that provided free summer activities for students in 3rd through 8th grades. The camp served students identified under the McKinney Vento Act as either homeless, or at risk of homelessness. A partnership between Women’s Opportunity & Resource Development (WORD) and the Missoula County Public Schools, the 6-week program still provides services to approximately 75 children per summer.

When Mark talks about his experience with the Next Step Wilderness program, his eyes light up and he becomes animated as he tells his story about how he learned to meet the challenges of the hard physical activity backpacking requires. He recounts, for example, breaking down in tears on a trail with an elevation gain “beyond belief”. He believes that learning how to endure and overcome these challenges has instilled in him a life-long work ethic. This wilderness-based, experiential education program was developed as an extension of the middle-school based program that Mark attended. The focus of this program was on backpacking, rock climbing, wilderness skills, education, health and nutrition; it worked to increase students’ self-confidence, self-awareness, and provide them mentoring and support throughout their teen years.
CONCLUSION

Mark’s story shows us that programs which get our teenagers outside, challenging them physically and mentally, can help them feel positive about their futures, even when their family or financial circumstances are difficult. He feels that the relationships he has built while participating in the outdoor programs have opened up amazing opportunities. He has been able to get jobs that would not have otherwise been available to him; he has references that make his resume robust and impressive. Mark is looking to finish his college degree but has to keep taking time off school to work so debts don’t define his post-college life. His dream is to graduate from the School of Forestry at the University of Montana. Through his involvement with his school-based program and Next Step Wilderness he has met and been inspired by people in the US Forest Service and has continued to take advantage of opportunities such as a five-day internship in Yellowstone National Park to monitor and watch wildlife.

That children love to move is irrefutable; that they are becoming increasingly sedentary is a sad trend. Giving children the space and place to play outside and to explore the wonders of the natural world is a choice made by schools, communities and families. We need to insist that our local, state and federal governments create policy solutions that help us make the choice to get out and be active. Funding for infrastructure, and school policies that follow physical activity recommendations are only a few of the things we need to promote active lifestyles. We need to reframe the debate about children being active as a public health issue and a low-cost way to reduce future healthcare costs. But most of all, we need to put down our phones, turn off the TV and computer and get outside whether it is in our backyards, our local parks or our national public lands.

SOURCES
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Personal Communication: Joshua Lisbon, Education & Community Outreach Manager, MPG Ranch, Lolo, Montana. Previously Camp Director for Summer, Arts and Leadership Camp and Program Director and lead field staff for Next Step Wilderness Program.
WHAT YOU CAN DO

What GOVERNMENT LEADERS at the federal, state or local levels can do:
• Pass the federal Moving Outdoors in Nature Act and the federal No Child Left Inside Act to engage children in outdoor learning at school.
• Adopt the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention environmental policies to support obesity prevention.
• Create comprehensive state strategies for connecting children to nature through education, health, parks and recreation. Pass a state “No (State name) Child Left Inside” act to develop a comprehensive state plan.
• Provide funds and manpower at the local level so that safe outdoor play areas can be developed, especially in underserved communities.

What SCHOOLS can do:
• Provide regular physical activity opportunities in schools to help children and adolescents be active for at least 60 minutes per day.
• Wellness programs should consider the needs of faculty and staff, so they can be role models for students and more healthy and productive educators.
• Schools and communities nationwide should prioritize joint-use agreements to provide access to school facilities for recreational use outside of school hours.
• Districts/schools provide information to parents about physical education and other school-based physical activity opportunities before, during and after the school day.
• After-school child care programs provide and encourage daily periods of at least 20 minutes of moderate/vigorous physical activity for all participants.
• Teachers and other school personnel use physical activity opportunities as rewards.

What COMMUNITIES can do:
• Community-wide campaigns to encourage physical activity.
• Prompts to encourage use of stairs.
• Creation of or enhanced access to places for physical activity combined with informational outreach activities.
• Town projects could include linking the town square to nearby bike and walking trails, landscaping with shade trees and providing benches at resting intervals.
• Choose sites for community events that are outdoors wherever possible, with accessible parking and paths and programs that are designed with inclusion in mind.
• Street-scale urban design and land-use policies.
• Community-scale urban design and land-use policies.
• Active transport choices to and from school.

What FAMILIES can do:
• Give children toys that encourage physical activity like balls, kites, and jump ropes.
• Encourage children to join a sports team or try a new physical activity.
• Limit TV time and keep the TV out of a child’s bedroom.
• Facilitate a safe walk to and from school a few times a week.
• Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
• Make a new house rule: no sitting still during television commercials.
• Spend time on a family hike at a park you haven’t yet visited.
• Consider taking a portion of your exercise routine outdoors by biking, hiking or snowshoeing together at a local preserve or nature center.