

The link between physical activity and academic achievement

**THE MORE THEY BURN
THE BETTER THEY LEARN**

Did you know that kids who are physically active get better grades?

Research shows that students who earn mostly **A**s are almost twice as likely to get regular physical activity than students who receive mostly **D**s and **F**s.

Physical activity can help students focus, improve behavior and boost positive attitudes. Do what you can to help your child be physically active, be it running, biking or swimming. Any type of physical activity is good, and 60 minutes a day is best. Their grades will thank you!

At a time when school administrators, teachers, and parents want to give students as much of a head start in math, science, and technology as possible and expanding academic curricula are competing for attention; it can be very easy to ignore physical education. This is true not just in the United States but in societies across the globe. It is no surprise therefore, that research is coming in from all over the world—from the U.S., South Africa, Spain, Germany, Korea, Australia, and Taiwan on this important topic.

In the past there was a tendency to think that time devoted to nonacademic goals had a negative effect on academic performance.

However, a growing body of scientific research is showing a link between physical fitness and improved brain function, cognition, and academic achievement. Physical activity has a direct effect on the brain, with increased oxygenation – improving concentration, neuron connectivity and information processing. Indirectly, the lessons learned and benefits gained by exercise and group sports can carry over into the classroom setting. Athletics immerse students in a culture of effort, persistence, and competitiveness. Sports activity also increases self-esteem and socialization that aid in academic performance.

While many researchers want more studies to firmly establish a correlation between these two important goals, they do agree on one thing: Adding time to academic subjects by *taking time from physical education programs does not enhance grades in these subjects, and may be detrimental to health*. They recommend that neither physical nor intellectual education be sacrificed at the expense of the other.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offer helpful tips for schools to incorporate more physical activity into their students' day, from recess, PE – and intramural sports, to active classroom activities and walk and bike-to-school programs. Visit <http://makinghealthasier.org/burntolearn> for more information.