



# Healthy HotSpot

*Connect to places for healthy living.*

## HEALTHY HOTSPOT SUCCESS STORY

### Schools in Suburban Cook County, Illinois Increase Student Physical Activity

#### Summary

Most school-aged children in suburban Cook County do not meet the recommended standards for daily physical activity. To support schools in implementing enhanced physical education (P.E.) to get kids moving more during the school day, the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) with several partners offered professional development opportunities, trainings and customized support. As a result, students increased their time of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) during P.E. class, and more schools spent 50% or more of their P.E. class in MVPA.

*“Kids [who] are more active are healthier. Healthier students are more prepared for class, and when they are prepared for class they learn better.” – Jim Calabrese, Principal, Freedom Middle School, School District 100*

#### Challenge

Compared to national rates, obesity rates are 40% higher for kindergartners and nearly 25% higher for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in suburban Cook County, according to a CCDPH 2010-2012 data brief. Healthy eating and regular physical activity can help lower the risk of obesity. Yet, 3 out of 4 high school students in suburban Cook County do not get the minimum recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity (SCC YRBS, 2011). Participation in physical activity can help improve academic achievement, enhance concentration, and lead to better classroom behavior.

#### Solution

*Suburban Cook County schools have the opportunity to help students succeed in school and in life by offering high quality enhanced P.E., which entails changing policies and practices so that students spend more time in MVPA during class. To support making these changes, CCDPH partnered with several agencies to raise awareness about the revised Illinois P.E. standards; build knowledge and skills of physical education teachers to implement enhanced P.E., and connected schools with resources as part of the Healthy HotSpot initiative. Key partners were the Intermediate Service Centers – the link between the Illinois State Board of Education and the 140+ local school districts in suburban Cook County.*



Cook County DEPT. of  
Public Health

Promoting health. Preventing disease. **Protecting you.**

Healthy HotSpot is an initiative led by the Cook County Department of Public Health that aims to build healthy places in suburban Cook County through community partnerships. For more information, visit [healthyhotspot.org](http://healthyhotspot.org).

Made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



*"Our hope is that we'll give kids the opportunity to be healthy, to learn academically in school, and that will really lay the foundation for a long-term healthy, happy, high quality of life for the kids that are reached by this program."*

Elissa Bassler, CEO, Illinois Public Health Institute

## **Results**

An evaluation of 42 suburban Cook County schools, comprising a total of 28,467 students and representing nine school districts, examined the impact of professional development, trainings, and customized support offered as part of the Healthy HotSpot initiative on implementation of enhanced P.E. and student physical activity during class.

Since October 2015, CCDPH and/or its partners have organized four Healthy Schools Summits, led 13 enhanced P.E. trainings for physical education teachers, convened two workshops for administrators, and provided direct technical support to schools at the district and building level. Schools participated in a variety of these options, resulting in

students having increased time in MVPA during P.E. class with more schools spending 50% or more of their P.E. class in MVPA.

Collectively, efforts have helped to raise awareness of the importance of physical activity in schools and enhance the quality of physical education programs across suburban Cook County. This work was funded by CDC.

## **Sustainable Success**

CCDPH and partners will continue to provide trainings, professional development and customized support to schools across suburban Cook County in implementing enhanced P.E., including resources for fitness testing. Fitness testing is a requirement of Illinois schools that can help students identify their fitness levels and set their own goals for improvement. Gathering this information also helps schools to better understand their students' health needs and encourage improvements in school physical education programs.

### **Learn more**

- Discover the benefits of physical activity in school: [www.cookcountypublichealth.org/healthy-hotspot/healthy-schools/healthy-active-schools](http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/healthy-hotspot/healthy-schools/healthy-active-schools).
- Learn more about how enhanced physical education supports better health, behavior, and learning at the [Illinois Public Health Institute](http://www.illinoispublichealth.org).
- Connect to resources and support through [Let's Move Active Schools](http://www.letsmove.org) and the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Healthy Schools Program](http://www.allianceforahealthiergeneration.org).
- Use the [Healthy HotSpot map](#) to find Healthy, Active Schools.