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RESOURCES: PHYSICAL EDUCATION

California is in the midst of an epidemic of [childhood obesity](#). There is increasing recognition of the critical contribution of regular physical activity to obesity prevention, as well as recent evidence that investing in physical education can prevent weight gain.¹ Physical Education in school not only can promote fitness levels, it can also play a vital role in enhancing both the academic and behavioral performance of children while building lifelong healthy habits.

Quality Physical Education. Quality physical education emphasizes intensive instruction in the motor and self-management skills needed to enjoy a wide variety of physical activities, keeps all students active, builds confidence, provides opportunities for leadership and cooperation, and is enjoyable to the student. The benefits of quality PE are many, including improvements in academic performance and health, increased weight control and physical fitness, development of motor skills and self esteem, and outlets for stress management and social development.²

New Physical Education Standards. Over the past few years, California has experienced a renewed focus on Physical Education. In 2005, The State Board of Education (SBE) published [Physical Education Model Content Standards](#) that define what quality PE looks like at every grade level. Additionally, the SBE is in the process of revising 1994 Physical Education [frameworks](#), which should be published by 2008. Despite the improved standards for PE, schools commonly fail to meet physical education mandates, as outlined in [Dropping the Ball](#), by not providing the required minutes of instruction. Continued, sustainable efforts are needed to ensure our schools and teachers can implement the new standards and offer effective and appealing Physical Education to our youth.

CCPHA Resource. Despite the standards, schools commonly fail to meet physical education mandates as outlined in CCPHA's resource, [Dropping the Ball](#), by not providing the amount of time required. Continued, sustainable efforts are needed to ensure our schools and teachers can implement the new standards and offer effective and appealing Physical Education to our youth.

Next Steps. To protect the health of our children and their ability to perform well academically, schools, parents and elected officials must make Physical Education a top priority. The state already mandates physical education, and has adopted educational standards for physical education. Now it is time for Californians to revolutionize Physical Education in our schools as a critical step in promoting health and preventing obesity.

Additional Resource. The California Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance ([CAHPERD](#)) promotes school, community and statewide programs of health, physical education, recreation and dance. CAHPERD is a membership organization and includes physical education teachers in California public schools.

Footnotes.

¹ Yancey, et al., Interim Final Report for The California Endowment (TCE): School Physical Activity and Physical Education Assessment Project, June 2006

² Payne, Greg and California Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, Elementary School Physical Education: A Position Statement. Available on line at http://clem.msced.edu/~quatrocj/position_state/position.html