

## **Exercise (Physical Activity) and Children**

We would like to share with you the following information regarding exercise (physical activity) and children, provided by the American Heart Association, National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Surgeon General.

### **Why is exercise or physical activity important for children?**

Physical activity helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints. In addition, physically active children enjoy healthy behaviors such as not smoking, eating a healthy diet, achieving academically, having a stronger self-image, greater self-confidence, and maintaining a tendency to be more physically active as adults.

### **How much activity does a child need?**

An active child participates in physical education classes, plays sports or other physical activities, performs regular household chores, spends recreational time outdoors and regularly travels by foot or bicycle. A common goal is to strive to achieve 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) each day.

### **What can we do to provide a healthy physical activity environment?**

- Regular walking, bicycling and outdoor play; use of playground and gymnasiums; and interaction with other children.
- Less than two hours per day watching television or DVD/ videotapes.
- Daily school or day-care physical education that includes at least 20 minutes of coordinated large-muscle exercise.
- Opportunities for physical activity that are fun, increase confidence in participating in physical activity, and involve friends and or peers.
- Regular family outings that involve walking, cycling, swimming, or other recreational activities. (See the East Family Fitness Challenge).
- Pour on the praise. Point out how well children are progressing with their exercise, skill development, and stamina.
- Don't fuss if children get dirty or sweaty.
- Positive role modeling for a physically active lifestyle by parents, other caretakers, physicians, and school personnel.

**The Physical Education program's effectiveness is based on the teamwork of the teacher, parent, student, and school. It is the desire of the staff that physical activity will become part of the student's daily lifestyle. Ultimately, it is our goal as Physical Educators, to promote lifelong fitness and personal wellness. We encourage the family to participate in weekend recreational activities and programs.**