Schools play a critical role in improving physical activity among adolescents.

**What are the benefits of physical activity?**

Regular physical activity can:
- Reduce risk of being obese
- Improve academic performance and grades
- Improve concentration in the classroom
- Build healthy bones and muscles
- Reduce depression and anxiety
- Reduce risk of chronic diseases like diabetes

**What are the recommendations for physical activity among adolescents?**

Adolescents should have 60 minutes or more of physical activity daily. These activities should include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aerobic</th>
<th>Muscle-strengthening</th>
<th>Bone-strengthening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most of the 60 or more minutes a day should include activities of either moderate- or vigorous intensity. Aerobic physical activity should be of vigorous intensity at least 3 days a week</td>
<td>Part of the 60 or more minutes of daily physical activity should include muscle-strengthening. Muscle-strengthening activities should be included on at least 3 days of the week.</td>
<td>Part of the 60 or more minutes of daily physical activity should include bone-strengthening. Bone-strengthening activities should be included on at least 3 days of the week.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examples of physical activity include:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moderate physical activities</th>
<th>Vigorous physical activities</th>
<th>Muscle-strengthening activities</th>
<th>Bone-strengthening activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active recreation such as rollerblading</td>
<td>Running</td>
<td>Push-ups</td>
<td>Hopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisk walking</td>
<td>Biking</td>
<td>Pull-ups</td>
<td>Skipping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biking (stationary bike)</td>
<td>Jumping rope</td>
<td>Weight-lifting exercises</td>
<td>Jumping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
<td>Karate</td>
<td>Working with resistance bands</td>
<td>Running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yard work (mowing lawn, raking leaves)</td>
<td>Vigorous dancing</td>
<td>Wall Climbing</td>
<td>Sports like gymnastics, basketball, and tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball &amp; softball</td>
<td>Sports like soccer &amp; tennis</td>
<td>Sit-ups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing and waxing car</td>
<td></td>
<td>Games like tug-of-war</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What was the status of physical activity among Georgia high school students in 2013?*

- **Percent who met the recommendations:**
  - Physical Activity (PA) ≥ 60 min/day: **25%** (N = 107,932) of students
  - Muscle-strengthening Exercises ≥ 3 days/week: **50%** (178,158) of students
  - Physical Education (PE) Attendance 5 days/week: **34%** (145,200) of students

- **Status by Grade:**
  - 9th (29%; n = 37,707), 10th (27%; 30,659) and 11th (25%; 22,820) grade students were more likely to have PA ≥ 60 min/day than 12th grade students (17%; 15,854).
  - 9th (57%; 62,475) and 10th (52%; 50,529) grade students were more likely to do muscle strengthening exercises ≥ 3 days/week than 12th grade students (43%; 31,456).
  - 9th (52%; 67,910) and 10th (32%; 36,190) grade students were more likely to attend PE 5 days/week than 12th (20%; 18,412) grade students.

- **Status by Sex:**
  - Male students (35%; 75,508) were more likely to have PA ≥ 60 min/day than female students (15%; 32,423).
  - Male students (60%; 106,755) were more likely to do strengthening exercises ≥ 3 days/week than female students (40%; 70,916).
  - Male students (39%; 71,206) were more likely to attend PE 5 days/week than female students (29%; 46,556).

- **Status by Race:**
  - There were no differences in PA ≥ 60 min/day, strengthening exercises ≥ 3 days/week or PE 5 days/week by race/ethnicity.

**Physical Activity and Physical Education Attendance by Grade, Sex, and Race/ethnicity among Georgia High School Students, 2013**

- Physical Activity ≥ 60 min/day
- Muscle-strengthening exercises ≥ 3 days/wk
- Physical Education Attendance 5 days/wk

![Chart showing physical activity and education attendance by grade, sex, and race/ethnicity among Georgia high school students in 2013.](chart.png)
**How has physical activity among Georgia high school students changed in the past decade?**

From 2005 to 2013, male high school students were more likely to be physically active \( \geq 60 \) min/day than female students. From 2005 to 2013, physical activity increased and then remained steady for both males and females.

In 2013, 9\(^{th}\), 10\(^{th}\), and 11\(^{th}\) grade males were more likely to be physically active \( \geq 60 \) min/day than 12\(^{th}\) grade males. From 2007 to 2013, PA \( \geq 60 \) min/day remained stable over the years for 9\(^{th}\), 10\(^{th}\), 11\(^{th}\), and 12\(^{th}\) grade males.

In 2013, 9\(^{th}\) grade females were more likely to be physically active \( \geq 60 \) min/day than 12\(^{th}\) grade females. PA \( \geq 60 \) min/day remained stable over the years for 9\(^{th}\), 10\(^{th}\), and 11\(^{th}\) grade females. The prevalence of 12\(^{th}\) grade females who reported having \( \geq 60 \) min/day of physical activity ranged from 7\% 2007 to 15\% in 2009.
What physical activity policies or practices were implemented in Georgia high schools in 2013?5

- 39% of schools offered opportunities for students to participate in PA before the school day through organized physical activities or access to facilities or equipment for PA.

- 49% of schools provided parents and families with health information designed to increase parent and family knowledge of PA.

- 70% of schools had a school health council, committee, or team that assessed the availability of PA opportunities for students

- 65% of schools had a joint use agreement for shared use of school or community PA facilities.

- 19% of schools had students participate in PA breaks in classrooms during the school day outside of PE class

- 59% of schools offered opportunities for all students to participate in intramural sports programs or PA clubs

- 60% of schools prohibited staff from excluding students from PE or PA to punish them for bad behavior or failure to complete class work in another class.

- Principal response: 89% of high schools had physical education teachers or specialists receive professional development training or courses on PE or PA during the past year.

- Health education teacher response: 45% of high schools had lead health education teachers receive professional development on physical activity and fitness.
Schools are an ideal setting for teaching youth how to adopt and maintain a healthy, active lifestyle. Schools can help youth learn how to be physically active for a lifetime.

What can high schools do to improve physical activity among students?\(^6,7\)

- Have policies that provide time for organized PA and free play.
- Provide information to parents about the benefits of PA through e-mails, website postings, newsletters articles, or at school events.
- Encourage staff and school leadership to be role models for students by being more physically active.
- Encourage families and local community groups to be involved in school-based physical activities and events (e.g., family physical activity nights, school health councils)
- Provide safe spaces, facilities, and equipment for PA in the school (e.g., a school gym).
- Provide a more comprehensive school-based PA program that includes the following:
  - Quality physical education
    - Example of a policy recommendation: Require daily PE for students in all grades for a total of at least 225 minutes per week.
  - Physical activity breaks
    - Example: Daily school-wide PA during morning announcements.
  - Classroom-based physical activity
    - Example: Taking a walk outside as part of science class.
  - Intramural sports
    - Example: Incorporate lifetime physical activities such as track and tennis.
  - Interscholastic sports
    - Example: Promote teamwork and healthy competition.
  - Walk- and Bike-to-School Program
    - Example: Engage your school in Georgia’s Safe-Routes-to-School Program.\(^6\)
- Hire physical education teachers who are certified and appropriately prepared to deliver quality instruction, programs, and practices.

References:
5. Georgia School Health Profiles, 2014.
8. Georgia Department of Transportation. [http://www.saferoutesga.org/content/about-georgia-safe-routes-school](http://www.saferoutesga.org/content/about-georgia-safe-routes-school)