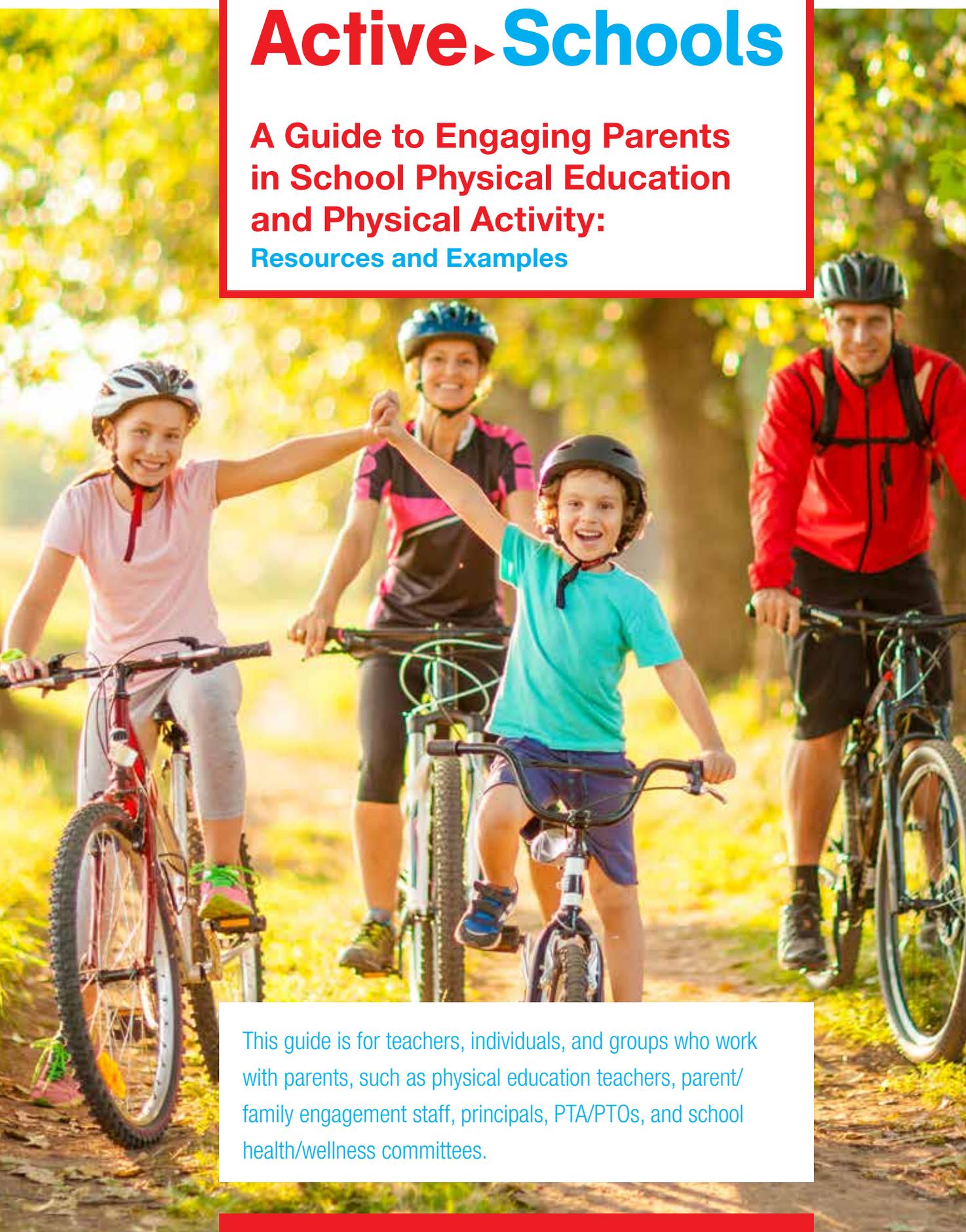
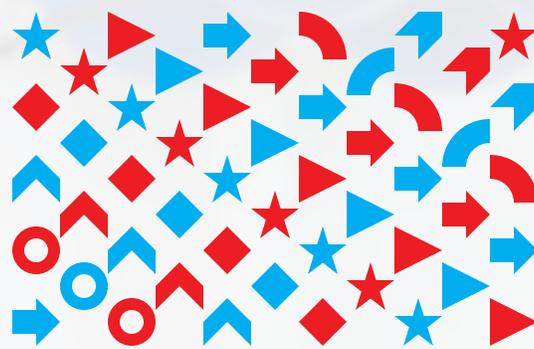


Active Schools

**A Guide to Engaging Parents
in School Physical Education
and Physical Activity:
Resources and Examples**



This guide is for teachers, individuals, and groups who work with parents, such as physical education teachers, parent/family engagement staff, principals, PTA/PTOs, and school health/wellness committees.



Active Schools

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03 Welcome Letter



Physical activity was so important for me growing up — and not just gymnastics! It didn't matter what me and my siblings did — participate in sports, ride a bike, play tag, see how long we could stand on one foot — my parents always encouraged us to find ways to get outside and play.

Now a mother of two, I believe more than ever in the importance of instilling a love of movement at an early age. In a society where the prevalence of children with obesity has more than tripled since the 1970s, regular physical activity is critical for promoting lifelong health and well-being of our children.

There are so many good things that come from being physically active. In addition to building strength, balance and body awareness, there are valuable lessons embedded in sport and play that include teamwork, leadership, strategy, perseverance, and goal-setting. Not to mention that physical activity benefits brain activity — and research shows that active students are better learners.

We need to promote the power of active living both in and outside of school. Our kids need physical education and a variety of opportunities to be physically active — and that's where parents and families fit in.

Parents play a vital role in the health of their children and can strongly influence the choices they make — be it how they spend their free time or what they eat. Beyond that, I also believe that we are the best role models for our children. Our children may not always want to do what we say, but quite often they want to do what we do. It is important for them to see that we value physical activity.

We don't want our children to view movement as a chore, but rather to be excited about skipping, jumping, walking and running! We want them to feel a sense of accomplishment when they reach their goals and experience rewards. Just like brushing their teeth and eating three meals a day, we want to teach them to make physical activity a part of every day.

A Guide to Engaging Parents in School Physical Education and Physical Activity: Resources and Examples provides a variety of creative ideas and simple suggestions for cultivating parental involvement at your school. I encourage you to read it, share it, and put these best practices to work — in order to help inspire the parents of your students to play a fundamental role in supporting physical activity opportunities at school and beyond.

Sincerely,

Shannon Miller
Active Schools Ambassador



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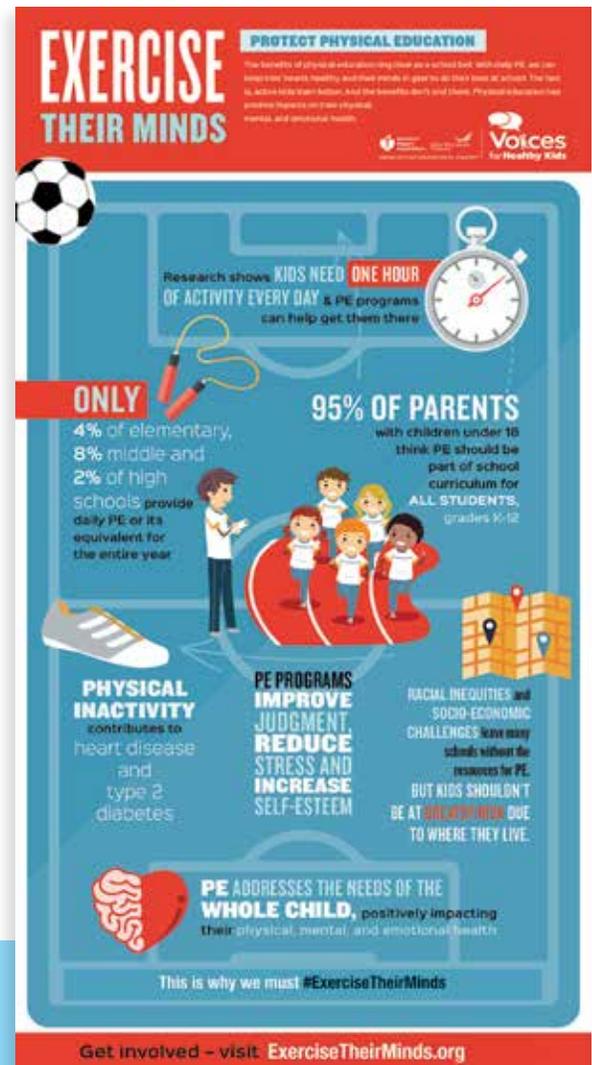
Section 1 | Engaging Parents in Physical Education and Physical Activity

Healthy Students Make Better Learners

There are a lot of responsibilities that come along with parenthood — supporting the education and growth of their child is one of them. It’s no secret that parents play a critical role in their child’s success. Cumulative evidence from several decades of research points to multiple benefits of family involvement for a child’s learning, including:¹

- Higher grades and test scores
- Better school attendance
- Higher self-esteem
- Improved social skills
- Higher graduation rates
- Lower rates of risk-taking behavior

Research also shows that good nutrition and regular physical activity are vital to a child’s academic success. Simply put, healthy students are better learners.² That’s why it’s so important for schools to engage parents in school health and wellness efforts and provide them with the insight and support they need to guide their child along the path of health, wellness and academic success.



What is Parent Engagement in Schools?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines parent engagement in schools as parents and school staff working together to support and improve the learning, development and health of children and adolescents.³

¹ https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/parental-involvement-in-schools/#_edn1

² <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/fs1239/>

³ https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/pdf/parent_engagement_strategies.pdf - page 6

Why Should Parents Care About Physical Education and Physical Activity?

When it comes to helping students practice the knowledge and skills they learn in physical education class outside of school time, families play an important role. Just like reading and math, what a child learns about health and wellness at school needs to be practiced and reinforced at home. From physical activity to food and beverage options, how a parent views and addresses physical activity and healthy eating can have a lifelong impact on a child.¹

Physical education classes and special events can be a fun and important way to involve parents at your school. Parents are interested in what goes on in school and what their children are learning. Physical education is no exception.

Kick Start Parent Engagement

Use the following resources to help engage and involve parents:

- [CDC's Parents for Healthy Schools webpage](#), [CDC's Parents for Healthy Schools: A Guide for Getting Parents Involved from K-12](#), [CDC's Parents for Healthy Schools: Making a Difference in Your Child's School PowerPoint Presentation](#)
- [Online Physical Education Network \(OPEN\)'s Parent Engagement Resource Center](#)
- [SHAPE America's Help Your Child Succeed webpage](#) and [SHAPE America's Getting to Know Your Child's PE Program: A Guide for Parents](#)
- [Getting Parents Involved in Physical Education](#)
- [How to Engage Parents in Your Curriculum](#)
- [Healthy Schools Campaign's Engaging Parents in School Wellness: Communication is Key](#) and [Engaging Parents in School Wellness: Support Learning at Home](#)
- [School and Family Partnerships Promote School Wellness](#)
- [Action for Healthy Kids' PE for Parents](#)
- [Voices for Healthy Kids physical education resources including a toolkit, graphics, and video](#)

Parents for Healthy Kids

Presented by Action for Health Kids and National PTA®, Parents for Healthy Kids is a national initiative created for parents, by parents, offering resources to help parents and caregivers become effective change agents in school and student health — this includes a website and online community forum, school grants, and trainings.

[Click for more.](#)

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5360371/>

Section 2 | Creating Active School Environments

A Whole School Effort

In addition to physical education teachers and classroom teachers, all school staff member have an important role to play in promoting school health and child health. In addition to providing students with learning opportunities that support physical activity and healthy eating, it's also important to create school environments that embrace these behaviors and encourage students to put them into practice. This helps parents see the types of lessons and behaviors their child is learning at school – and better visualize how they can be practiced and supported at home.

Active Classrooms: A Win-Win-Win for Students, Teachers and Parents

Research shows that physical activity affects the brain in ways that allow students to be more engaged and ready to learn – and if a child is sitting too long, s/he is missing out on vital movements that increase brain function and activity. Access fun and educational resources for active classrooms (and homework breaks at home), some available for free, from Active Schools' partner organizations. (link Active Schools' partner organizations to:

<https://champion.activeschoolsus.org/active-classrooms>

Visual Cues Keep Physical Education and Physical Activity Top of Mind

Consider the following strategies for clearly conveying your school's commitment to supporting physical education and physical activity:

Get Them On Board

[Bulletin boards](#) are a great way to create an atmosphere that broadcasts the benefits of physical activity and reinforces healthy lifestyle choices. Use them with students in classes as part of actual lessons or as a way to inform, inspire and motivate.

Spell It Out

Use posters, such as SHAPE America's free "What I Learn in PE Class" to help students make the connection between what they learn in class and why they're learning it.

Recognize + Reward

[Brag tags](#) and [superstar certificates](#) – creating physical education and [physical activity awards](#) are a fun and engaging way to recognize and reinforce positive healthy behaviors. To support overall well-being, avoid rewards and incentives that are food based.

Keep It Fresh

Rotate and update your banner, awards and displays on a regular basis – every 30-60 days to keep your students engaged.

Section 3 | Building Awareness & Community Involvement

Newsletters Help Spread the Word

Looking for ideas to enhance communication and share updates about your program with parents and the community? Put it in print! Regular communication is a key ingredient for getting people and families involved. Newsletters and announcements are easy to create and an efficient way to deliver valuable information in a timely manner.

Fit to Print — The Power of Promotion

Online and off, consider the following strategies for clearly communicating the latest opportunities and events, as well as all of the wonderful things that are happening in the world of physical education:

Post, Hashtag, Tweet

Use your school's website or social media presence to [educate parents about your physical education program](#), [celebrate the active achievements of your students](#) and provide a physical activity resource for the community. For shareable social media graphics, visit [Voices for Healthy Kids](#).

Make Headlines

A monthly or quarterly newsletter is a fun and fantastic way to keep parents informed about [what you do in class](#), [why it's important and how families can support your efforts at home](#).

Announce Yourself

No time to produce a newsletter of your own? Consider submitting regular announcements to an already established newsletter, such as your school's PTA.

Hand It Out

[Flyers](#), [handouts](#), [praise postcards](#) and [worksheets](#) are easy and engaging ways to help kids bring home a message of physical activity and wellness.

For additional media resources, check out the Voices For Healthy Kids Physical Education Toolkit.

Are You an Active School Champion?

Teachers, parents, community members — all are invited to join the movement as champions for Active Schools. Get access to free resources, physical education and physical activity grant opportunities, and more!

Register today!

www.activeschoolsus.org



Section 4 | Making a Mark at Back to School Night

An Active Open House Can Leave a Lasting Impression

Back to school also means back to physical education. Back to school nights and open house events are excellent opportunities to engage and inform parents about their student's physical education program for the coming year.

Welcome Back! Get the School Year Off to a Smart Start

A successful open house experience can be a positive step to establishing good parent-teacher communication for the entire year. Consider the following tips for making your back to school night active and inviting:

Keep Them Moving

[Parent pedometers](#) that count steps as they move from classroom to classroom, a school-wide [scavenger hunt](#) or an [activity “play”](#) where students showcase what their physical education program looks like — there are dozens of ways to involve the parents and do more than talk about physical education — they also show it in motion.

Take the Stage

Lights, camera, action! Leave a lasting impression. Create and post a [video](#) or [virtual presentation](#) that parents can watch — at the event and even at home.

Start the Conversation

Encourage [questions](#). And be prepared with [answers](#). Invite parents to be active advocates — not only for their child, but also for themselves. Provide them with [tips and tools](#) they can use to create meaningful conversations with their child to support physical activity and wellness at home.

Don't Miss Showing This Fun Video to Parents

At a parent/family event, show this professionally-produced, fun 1 minutes video about working adults having recess.

The final message is “This isn't our reality. But it can be a reality for our kids.”

Click on this box to see the video on You Tube

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Section 5 | Participating In *Take Your Parent to PE Week*

A Prime Opportunity to Cultivate Parent Engagement

Want to directly demonstrate to parents the importance of physical education? Make them part of the action! Active Schools sponsors the national [Take Your Parent to PE Week in September of each year](#).

Tips for Planning a Successful Take Your Parent to PE Week

The purpose of [Take Your Parent to PE Week](#) is to introduce your school's physical education program and teacher(s) to parents so that they will engage with physical education throughout the year.

Simple Step-By-Step Plan

Whether your school chooses to get involved in this special week or plan an event later on in the school year, any school can participate. The steps for creating a successful [Take Your Parent to PE Week](#) are relatively simple:

1. **Select your dates.** Designate a week in which parents are invited to participate in class.
2. **Invite parents to participate.** Create announcements and [flyers](#), create signage around school and use social media to promote the event.
3. **Get in the game.** Plan a week of [fun and energetic lessons](#) that illustrate learning (knowledge and skill), meaningful practice and enjoyment – and ideally include parent participation.
4. **Provide tips for getting active.** During physical education class, provide information about how they can support their children to achieve and maintain a healthy, physically active lifestyle at home.
5. **Share your story.** At the end of class, ask parents to share their experience on social media using the hashtag #ParentsLovePE. We hope that you, as a teacher, will do the same!

Energized Ideas

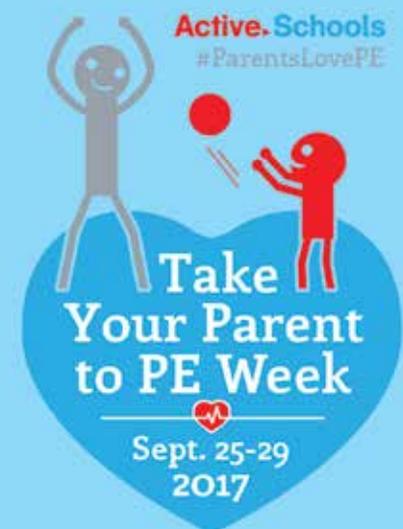
Use the following resources to develop and define your own game plan:

- [Beyond Kickball](#) – What are physical education and physical literacy?
- [Vintage Hills Elementary](#) - Bring Your Parents to PE Week & The PE Movie videos

The First Take Your Parent to PE Week (2017) was a Huge Success!

Classrooms across the country invited parents to join their child in class, break a sweat, and celebrate the importance of physical education. Online and off — schools, parents, teachers and Active Schools partners promoted the power and importance of physical education:

- Almost 7,000 visitors came to the website where they could download a Take Your Parent to PE Week logo and poster for free.
- Media coverage included an article on [Huffington Post](#), as well as multiple mentions in local newspapers across the country.
- To see some of the amazing posts online, visit Twitter, Instagram or Facebook and search #ParentsLovePE and @ActiveSchoolsUS.



Section 6 | Bringing Physical Education Home

Give “Home Run” New Meaning

English, science, math — homework has long played a vital role in many school subjects. Why not physical activity and wellness? Be it a long term assignment — run 100 miles with your family — or a simple task that can be completed in an evening — play catch or tag in the backyard — homework assignments can be a powerful way to help students and their families bring physical education into their every day lives.

Taking It Home — Keep Kids Moving Outside of Class

Consider the following resources when creating assignments for your students to take home:

Making a Case for Homework

There is some evidence that assigning homework or extra credit for physical education class increases physical activity levels for school children and can improve their fitness and weight status. The University of Wisconsin takes a closer look at [how homework helps](#).

Active Ideas

Looking for inspired ideas that will keep your students moving outside of class? The [American Heart Association](#) offers 25 fun suggestions that focus on movement and physical activity. Another great idea — [Take PE Home Activity Tubs](#) that students can check out and take home!

The “Ask Me ...” Assignment

Take a cue from [PE Central](#). Craft a letter your students can take home that encourages parents to ask questions about different physical activity skills — throwing, catching, balancing — and encourage their child to demonstrate what they’ve learned.

It All Adds Up

Tasting parties, scavenger hunts, hula-hoop contests — getting in 60 minutes of physical activity per day is so much more fun when family and friends get into the game! SHAPE America offers [101 Tips for Family Fitness Fun](#). [Action for Healthy Kids](#) also provides dozens of ideas for keeping families active at home.



Section 7 | Organizing Family Fitness Nights

Fitness Is a Family Affair

More than fun and games, Family Fitness Nights are an inexpensive and effective way to get families moving and shine a positive light on physical education. Family Fitness Nights provide the opportunity to put the power of play and movement into practice — and inspire parents to make healthy choices part of their everyday lives!

Getting Started with Family Fitness Nights

It's easier than you think to host a night for your students and their parents:

Location, Location, Location

Select a location large enough to comfortably hold all the activities you want to include — a gymnasium or cafeteria usually works best. Alternately, team up with a local resource close to school — a park, a climbing gym or community center. *Education World* shares [four unique approaches](#) to planning a winning family fitness event.

Choose Your Activities

Schools that host fitness nights commonly set up stations for different activities throughout the space. For example, one station could be a video game dance mat, another one has a basketball hoop or an obstacle course — the [possibilities](#) are endless. Here's [10 tips](#) from Gopher — plus, consider the following resources. From balloon basketball to freeze pin soccer, PTOToday.com offers a variety of [fun ideas and activities](#) to explore. Find more ideas at [Action for Healthy Kids](#).

Involve the Entire Community

Some schools tap their local communities to provide raffle items and free services such as health screenings, chair massages, bike helmet fittings and safety demonstrations. Organizations you might contact include the [American Heart Association](#), local police and fire departments and your local gyms, sports equipment or health food stores.

