Core-4 Strategies Help Students Stay Fit

**The Challenge:** Studies have shown that large-scale obesity and chronic disease prevention fitness programs targeted at early adolescents can have a significant, positive impact on cardiovascular health. Incorporating these programs within the school day provides an ideal environment to implement and determine the impact of sustained fitness interventions that can inform a statewide cardiovascular fitness data collection system.

**Project Goals:** This grant supported efforts to incorporate evidence-based physical activity strategies — called Core-4 — in 48 middle schools with families and children across the state. The Core-4 strategies are:

- Increase accrued minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity in physical education classes (Active Physical Education)
- Encourage active classroom breaks
- Provide organized physical activity during recess (Active Recess)
- Provide physical activity opportunities before and after school

**Results:** School personnel received extensive training that included in-person presentations from national experts and a two-day symposium. Schools received state-of-the-art resources, including pedometers, recess activity guides and support for after-school programs.

The schools were divided into two intervention groups, with one group delaying implementation until year 2 of the project to evaluate program effectiveness. Results indicated significant improvements in cardiovascular fitness among both groups. The most significant gains took place in the first year of program implementation. The team also found that boys were more likely to experience gains than girls, and that Hispanic students had lower fitness scores than students of other ethnicities.

As a result of this project, the Department of Public Instruction has incorporated school-based physical activity into other projects and initiatives. The project partners received funding to participate in a five-year project with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and are using the results from this project to inform that initiative. Partners are also testing methodologies for future efforts that will use monitoring devices to track physical activity throughout the school day.