

Does Physical Activity Lead to Higher Grades?

Recently we told you about a finding that more years of school could help students get higher scores on intelligence tests. That was the finding of a study of teenage males in Norway. Now, other research shows that physical activity may help students do better in their classes.

The research comes as educators in some countries are reducing time for activities like physical education. They are using the time instead for academic subjects like math and reading.

Researchers at VU University Medical Center in Amsterdam reviewed the results of fourteen studies. Twelve were from the United States, one from Canada and one from South Africa.

The studies appeared between nineteen ninety-seven and two thousand nine. They included more than fifty-five thousand children, ages six to eighteen.

Researcher Amika Singh says the studies showed a link between physical activity and scores on subjects such as math, English and reading.

"Based on the results of our study we can conclude that being physically active is beneficial for academic performance."

Ms. Singh offers some possible explanations. "There are, first, physiological explanations, like more blood flow, and so more oxygen to the brain. Being physically active means there are more hormones produced like endorphins. And endorphins make your stress level lower and your mood improved, which means you also perform better."

Also, students involved in organized sports learn rules and how to follow them. This could improve



Photo: AP

Children exercise at Wonderland Avenue Elementary School in the Hollywood Hills area of Los Angeles in 2010

their classroom behavior and help them keep their mind on their work.

The study leaves some questions unanswered, however. Ms. Singh says it is not possible to say whether the amount or kind of activity affected the level of academic improvement. This is because of differences among the studies.

Also, they were mostly observational studies. An observational study is where researchers do not do controlled comparisons. They only describe what they observe. So they might observe a link that students who are more active often have better grades. But that does not necessarily mean being active was the cause of those higher grades.

The researchers said they found only two high-quality studies. They called for more high-quality studies to confirm their findings. They also pointed out that "outcomes for other parts of the world may be quite different."

Still, the general finding was that physically active kids are more likely to do better in school. Ms. Singh says schools should consider that finding before they cut physical education programs. Her Amika Singh's paper on "Physical Activity and Performance at School" is published in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine.

Welcome to Voice of America's Special English Article Activity

This worksheet is designed to be used with: ***Does Physical Activity Lead to Higher Grades?***

Level: beginner - intermediate

Time: 20 - 30 minutes

This worksheet will help you learn new vocabulary about physical activity. You will answer questions about a study on the benefits of physical activity, and write a short paragraph about whether it should be cut in schools.

1. What does being *physically active* mean?

studying academics, like math and reading

playing sports and exercising

2. What does *beneficial* mean?

unhealthy

bad

good

3. Look again at the title of the article: *Does Physical Activity Lead to Higher Grades?*

Which is this article about?

If exercise can help students get good grades.

If studying can help students get good grades.

If getting good grades can help students exercise.

4. Two findings are mentioned in the first paragraph of the article. What are they?

a. _____

b. _____

5. Some teachers are reducing school time for physical education. What are they using that time for instead?

6. Researchers at VU University Medical Center in Amsterdam looked at the results of 14 studies.

Where did those studies come from?

7. Complete the following blanks with numbers. The sentence is about the studies in question 6.

The studies appeared between _____ and _____. They included more than _____ children, ages _____ to _____.

8. Amika Singh is a researcher. She says that being physically active is beneficial for academic performance.

What are some reasons for this finding?

physiological reasons

students learn rules through sports

teachers are more tired

9. Why does the study leave some questions unanswered?

10. Is the following sentence *true* or *false*? Correct the sentence if it is false.

Ms. Singh thinks schools should cut physical education programs.

OVER TO YOU

Do you think it's a good idea to cut physical education in schools? Do you think students should study more academic subjects?

Write 5-8 sentences explaining your answer.

ANSWER KEY

1. playing sports and exercising
2. good
3. If exercise helps students get good grades.
4. a. more years of school could help students get higher scores on intelligence tests; b. physical activity may help students do better in their classes
5. They are using the time instead for academic subjects like math and reading.
6. Twelve were from the United States, one from Canada and one from South Africa.
7. 1997; 2009; 55,000; 6; 18
8. physiological reasons, students learn rules through sports
9. students' own answers [differences among the studies, they were mostly observational studies, researchers found only two high-quality studies.]
10. false; Ms. Singh thinks schools should not cut physical education programs.