

SPARK After School Research

The SPARK After School (AS) program being disseminated today applies the lessons learned from rigorous research and subsequent field-testing in the “real-world.” SPARK AS is designed to provide children and adolescents ages 5 and up with inclusive, highly active movement opportunities that foster social and motor development while maximizing time spent in MVPA (moderate to vigorous physical activity) and fitness pursuits.

The SPARK After School philosophy: Include ALL youth, actively engage ALL youth, and instill the love of lifelong movement in ALL youth.

Note: The numbers after each outcome correlate to the project/paper references that follow.

General

- Experiences with:
 - Variety of implementers including YMCA's, Parks and Recreation, Boys and Girls Clubs, school district led AS programs
 - Large implementations and ability to scale (1,2,3; and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, statewide in PA)
 - Urban projects e.g., Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, Chicago Parks District, NYC Dept. of Health, many more)
- Excellence of training component (i.e., Hawaii Fun 5, YMCA Greater Miami, Miami Dade County Parks, Arlington, Virginia Dept. of Parks and Recreation) and hundreds more via SPARK AS workshop evaluations)
- Prompted more physical activity scheduling (1)
- Demonstrated ability to successfully adapt to Summer Camp environments (4)
- Saved staff preparation time, improved their work lives, and developed leader confidence (1)
- Supported need for more PA in after school settings (5)
- Referred to as an “Inexpensive Strategy” (1)

Changes in Physical Activity and Healthy Behaviors

- Increases in youth:
 - MVPA (Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity) (1,2,3)
 - Fitness scores (1,2)
 - Nutrition knowledge (1,2)
 - Time in game play (1)
 - Activity levels away from their AS program (1)
 - Daily strenuous leisure time (1)
- Decreases in youth:
 - BMI (2)
 - Body fat via skinfold (2)
 - Blood pressure (1,2)
 - Time spent in management (less active, not learning) segments of classes (1)
 - Minutes standing, sitting, and lying during classes (1)
 - Sedentary behaviors (2)



Selected References:

1. Hawaii High 5 dissemination and studies, University of Hawaii
2. Miami Dade's Fit2Play study and papers, University of Miami
3. YMCA of Greater Miami study, University of Miami
4. Arlington, Virginia project/study, Virginia Dept. of Health
5. California Journal of Health Promotion Vol 3, Issue 4, 2005