



SPARK and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's HOST (Healthy Out-of-School Time) Framework A RESOURCE GUIDE

SPARK is a research-based, public health organization dedicated to creating, implementing, and evaluating programs that promote lifelong wellness. SPARK strives to improve the health of children, adolescents, and adults by disseminating evidence-based Physical Education, After School, Classroom Activity Breaks, Early Childhood, and Coordinated School Health programs to teachers and recreation leaders serving Pre-K through 12th grade students.

This guide focuses on how The SPARK Programs (with a focus on SPARK's After School Program) helps afterschool programs and others achieve the goals of the **Alliance for a Healthier Generation's HOST (Healthy Out-of-School Time) Framework** in regards to physical activity standards and best practices.

HOST Standard PA 01:

Content and Quality. Our organization's physical activity offerings support the USDHHS 2008 guidelines recommending that all youth obtain a daily minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity per day that includes a mixture of moderate and vigorous intensity activity as well as bone and muscle strengthening activities.

How SPARK After School resources, training, and follow-up help programs meet PA 01 Standard:

- The SPARK After School Program suggests a minimum 30 minutes of organized physical activity daily, emphasizing health-related fitness. SPARK activities are designed to be approximately 15-20 minutes in length. Leaders can prepare for longer or shorter periods by simply choosing more or fewer activities depending on time available.
- The focus during each session is on youth being actively engaged in developmentally appropriate movement. SPARK AS is also designed to help participants attain motor skills, develop health-related knowledge, and refine social values and positive character traits.
- The goal of SPARK AS activities is also 50% MVPA during physical activity time. Activities as well as instructional strategies both demonstrated and discussed at workshops help reach this goal.
- The sections in the SPARK AS manual include:
 - **ASAP (Active Soon as Possible)**, where the goal of getting participants active from the start is important to SPARK. This section includes a variety of enjoyable activities to begin activity immediately. They use little or no equipment, are fun and challenging, and promote health-related fitness. They quickly involve all participants in MVPA and few instructions or rules to slow them down.
 - **Personal Best**, which involves both Personal Challenge Days which provide structure for documenting benchmarks, setting goals, and reflecting on past success as well as Personal Development Days which offer leaders active options for engaging participants as they work to improve in all Personal Best areas. Both are designed to reinforce personal growth, active lifestyles, healthful eating habits and fun.
 - **Fitness Fun** includes 5 subsections (Fitness Circuits, Group Fitness, Jump Rope, Movement Bands, and Walk/Jog/Run) and provides activities to focus on the 5 components of health-related fitness. Activities not only help improve and maintain fitness but also teach fitness concepts as well.
 - **Cool Cooperatives** includes 4 subsections (Team Builders, Cooperative Dances, Kin-Ball® Games, and Parachute Play) that focus on cooperation. Activities help build trust, communication, and problem-solving skills while reinforcing teamwork and positive relationships through active, fun games and dances.

- **Great Games** includes 4 subsections (Chasing and Fleeing, Aerobic Games, Playground Activities, and Simple Games -for the younger players) that provide a variety of games for use with all after school populations. They are fun and easy to learn to increase activity time and decrease management time. This helps increase MVPA, increases opportunities to build skills and strategies that may transfer to other games and activities on their own. The focus is on play and enjoyment of physical activity.
- **Super Sports** sections include Basketball, Flying Disc, Football, Net Sports, Soccer, Softball, and World Games. The focus within these sections is on skill development and skill application in small-sided games and activities. Players enjoy the activities because they can be adapted for a wide variety of skill levels.
- SPARK has many ways to adapt activities to meet specific needs
 - On the backside of each activity there is a Game Reset which provides Rewind ideas to simplify activities as well as Fast Forward ideas to increase challenges for those who need it.
 - In addition, all SPARK activities include The Right Fit which are suggestions for modifying activities to specific group sizes (small or large), limited space, and ranges of age and skill levels.
 - SPARK also offers strategies to promote inclusion of all players both in the manual as well as demonstrated and discussed at workshops.

HOST Standard PA 02:

Staff Training. Our staff participate in learning about physical activity through effective training models with content that is evidence-based.

How SPARK After School resources, training, and follow-up help programs meet PA 02 Standard:

- SPARK’s After School Program targets all out-of-school physical activity programs (e.g., after school, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, recreation center, day care center, or camps). Years of research and extensive field-testing throughout the country has shown SPARK After School to be effective for children and adolescents ages 5-14. The SPARK after school philosophy: Include ALL youth, actively engage ALL youth, and instill the love of lifelong movement in ALL youth.
- When an agency or organization chooses SPARK After School, they receive four components necessary for successful promotion of physical activity:
 - **Curriculum:** An easy to use 3-ring binder (simply pull out a lesson, place it on a clipboard, and take it to class) with over 400 pages of cooperative, cultural and aerobic games, dances from around the world, and enjoyable skill and sport activities written in scope and sequence. Activities are more inclusive, active, and enjoyable because they’ve been highly modified by our team of experts, and tested for effectiveness in hundreds of after school programs nationwide. The SPARK AS Manual is a practical document presented in a simple and easy to implement format.
 - **Training:** The focus of After School is to provide leadership techniques and activity ideas that encourage youth to be physically active. SPARK workshops are fun and “hands-on.” Youth leaders learn by doing and are motivated by SPARK’s dynamic and knowledgeable trainers. SPARK trainers travel the globe to provide workshops on days and at times that are convenient for everyone. SPARK workshops are tailored to the needs of the leaders attending, however most workshops include information on adapting activities for special needs, motivating participants in a positive way, positive behavior management, integrating physical activity throughout the after school program, and discussion of Home Plays which provide leaders and participants with ideas to increase physical activity at home with family and friends.
 - **Equipment:** A select team of SPARK After School Program developers, curriculum writers, and workshop presenters meet annually to modify the equipment sets (a set includes every item needed to instruct everything in a SPARK manual) so they align perfectly with SPARK After School activities.
 - **Follow-up Support:** For an after school program to work and last, ongoing consultation must be provided. SPARK is committed to extensive follow-up via their unique “SPARK Stars” institutionalization model, and myriad free value adds including lifetime support via 800 number and e-mail consultation, a monthly webinar series, social networking opportunities, and a monthly eNewsletter that includes SPARK updates and teaching tips

HOST Standard PA 03:

Social Support. Our organization and staff create a social environment (including positive relationships among staff, youth, families and community) that encourages children to enjoy and participate in physical activity.

How SPARK After School resources, training, and follow-up help programs meet PA 03 Standard:

- SPARK workshops teach leaders about appropriate participation and leading of activities with participants of after school programs. This includes adapting activities, using positive behavior management, and how to utilize youth in leadership positions in activity sessions.
- Home Play Activities are ideas participants can take home to encourage personal development and increase physical activity levels. These ideas are found on the back of each lesson plan as well as on SPARKfamily.org to be sent home to parents or inserted into a newsletter or website. Activities promote family involvement and help encourage everyone to make healthy choices.
- SPARK includes a sample Parent Introductory Letter to use as a guide when introducing parents to the SPARK program and its goals.
- SPARK also provides resources for leaders on maintaining appropriate behavior based on research. It includes ways to increase appropriate behavior as well as ideas for decreasing inappropriate behavior including selective ignoring, proximity control, desists, behavior contracts and others all geared to provide leaders with tools to enable them to deal with behavior issues before and as they occur.

HOST Standard PA 04:

Organizational Support. Our organization supports physical activity through management and budgeting practices.

How SPARK After School resources, training, and follow-up help programs meet PA 04 Standard:

- SPARK workshops and curriculum create high quality physical activity experiences for youth. After leaders have attended workshops and begin leading youth, they can assess their lesson quality using SPARK's Activity Session Quality Checklists for 2 levels of assessment. It is suggested that this be used as a self-assessment for their own learning and growth.
- Each SPARK lesson also includes a Notes section for leaders to write ideas for improving the lesson the next time they lead.
- Other resources include free follow-up where leaders can email or call SPARK anytime to ask questions they may have. SPARK also provides monthly webinars on timely topics for leaders to take part in.

HOST Standard PA 05:

Environmental Support. Our organization's physical environment supports physical activity standards.

How SPARK After School resources, training, and follow-up help programs meet PA 05 Standard:

- A select team of SPARK After School Program developers, curriculum writers, and workshop presenters meet annually to modify the equipment sets (a set includes every item needed to instruct everything in a SPARK manual) so they align perfectly with SPARK After School activities. Equipment is age and developmentally appropriate and depending upon budget, choices are provided for sizes, densities, weight, color, etc. for youth to choose the equipment that is right for their skill level.
- SPARK activities have many adaptations available for use with indoor space or outdoor space to meet the needs of most programs.

- The SPARK After School Program was designed to address after school guidelines to focus implementation of physical activity and to follow national recommendations for health-related fitness program and participant activity levels, and character education concepts.

Below is a brief sample of the awards that The SPARK Programs have received over the years:

- SPARK was cited in the U.S. Surgeon General's Report as a "School-based solution to our nation's health care crisis."
- SPARK has been validated by the U.S. Department of Education and earned "Exemplary Program" status.
- SPARK has received the "Governor's Commendation" award for improving the health of California's youth.
- SPARK earned "Gold" rankings from a Cooper Institute funded study examining effective U.S. activity and health interventions. SPARK was the ONLY program to achieve the highest level for K-8 physical education.
- SPARK was identified by the HSC Foundation as a successful model for combating childhood obesity in their report [*Fighting Obesity: What Works, What's Promising*](#).
- SPARK was identified by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) as a national model for programs designed to increase physical activity and combat childhood obesity in their report [*School-Based Physical Education: An Action Guide*](#).
- SPARK is endorsed in the [*USDA SNAP-ED Tool Kit for the States*](#) as an evidence-based policy and environmental change intervention in school settings.
- SPARK was chosen as a "Selected School-Based Intervention" in the report [*Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance*](#) by the National Academy of Sciences.
- A Child Trends report titled [*What Works for the Prevention and Treatment of Obesity Among Children*](#) highlights SPARK as a program that has proven to increase physical activity among students.
- SPARK was cited as a model program in the report [*Fostering Physical Activity for Children and Youth: Opportunities for a Lifetime of Health*](#), released by the Convergence Partnership, highlighting promising organizational practices and public policies that create environments encouraging youth to be physically active.
- SPARK was identified by the National Cancer Institute as a "School-based physical education intervention" recommended by the [*Guide to Community Preventive Services*](#).
- An Institute of Medicine report titled [*Educating the Student Body: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School*](#) cites SPARK as a proven solution for increasing the quantity and quality of physical education in school.

Testimonials:

We first began using the SPARK After School Program at our YMCA of South Palm Beach County in 2002. Our after school staff loved the binder full of great ideas and easy to use activities -- and the teambuilding and fun workshops SPARK conducted at our site. SPARK coordinates their lessons, teaching strategies, and equipment sets and their approach WORKS! I highly recommend SPARK for every Florida after school physical activity program!

Bev Johnson - Executive Director, DeVos-Blum Family YMCA - Boynton Beach, FL

I first learned of SPARK at Nike, when I participated in a workshop there. I was so impressed with their after school program that I insisted we write it into our PEP Bill grant. Now, everyone in the Atlanta Boys and Girls Clubs knows how great the SPARK curriculum, training, and Sportime equipment is. Together, this is an unbeatable team and I highly recommend them to all PEP Bill winners.

Matt Ryan - Executive Director of Atlanta Boys and Girls Club - Atlanta, CA

The Boys & Girls Club of Green Bay has been implementing the SPARK After School Program for the past 3 years. The SPARK program has been easy to implement since it comes with a large manual and the staff can just pick out the games and activities that they want to play with the kids and the sheet has all the information on it. The SPARK Train the Trainer has been a huge benefit for us. We do about three trainings a year with our staff and still have the flexibility of doing one-on-one visits with the staff while they are running programs to give them some pointers or help with certain situations. Another benefit to SPARK is that there are games that we can play in small areas that still get the kids the required Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity. The games/activities can be modified for smaller or larger areas which comes in handy most every place that we go. All-in-all we are very pleased with the SPARK program and it works very well with our After School programs.

Kevin Konkol - Senior Director of Operations Boys Girls Club of Green Bay - Green Bay, WI

We have found the entire 'SPARK package' amazing! The newly improved after-school curriculum is incredibly easy to use - you have everything laid out for you in easy-to-understand instructions to start an engaging physical activity with youth. The simplicity of use is what makes this curriculum stand-out over others.

Michele Gregory - Community Health Promotion Programs Manager, Arlington Department of Parks and Recreation - Arlington, VA

SPARK has been wonderful for Hawaii afterschool programs. We started implementing SPARK in 2003 in only 7 sites. Now, SPARK is part of the afterschool program in more than 175 afterschool sites, reaching more than 18,000 children. SPARK is fantastic! The curriculum-matched equipment and ready-to-use binder has all the activities to implement a successful physical activity session. And lets not forget its philosophy that is in every activity where every single child is included no matter her/his skill level- everybody participates. Every single detail is planned, tested, and every activity is fun and safe. The support from SPARK staff is supreme. Any question, comment and situation that you have, they are there to listen and to help you. The resources that they offer throughout their website, newsletter and other types of communication are invaluable. In summary, I have only positive things to say about SPARK.

Paula Adams - Program Director, Kahoomiki - Honolulu, HI