

JAYNE GREENBERG

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH LITERACY

Miami-Dade County, FL, USA / 355,000 Students (392 Schools) / Grades: K-12



'Our goal as educators is to create lifetime learners. By making high-quality physical education and physical activity fun, we see a chance to create lifetime learners who fall in love with fitness and embrace it for life.'

Most of the stories included in this section are from primary school principals and head teachers. However, changemakers for active schools exist at all levels of school administration. Here, Jayne Greenberg shares how one of the largest and most diverse school districts in the United States can inspire nearly 400 active schools.

I am a former physical education teacher, so I might be more inclined than most to think that kids should get as much physical activity as humanly possible. I am also a school district administrator, which means I understand the realities of budget cuts and time constraints.

Our district is the 4th largest in the United States. It is also one of the most socially and culturally diverse, with students speaking 125 different languages and dialects. Our size and diversity present us

with a unique set of challenges. This is why we initially set out to create a world-class fitness program to reduce health disparities. That's still our mission, but what we've found is that creating opportunities for all of our kids to be active all day long makes for better-behaved, higher-performing students.

Years ago, our physical education classes were focused on team and individual sports. We found that the kids who liked sports (often the same ones who excelled at it) stuck with physical education and physical activity when they got to middle school. The kids who didn't care for sports voted with their feet. They opted out as soon as the chance came. This inspired us to find other solutions and to do the most important thing of all: make it fun.

WHAT WE DO & HOW WE MAKE IT WORK

60+ MINUTES PER DAY

In elementary school, children are required to participate in 150 minutes of physical education every week, alongside 45 weekly minutes of recess. In Miami—Dade we mandate that the weekly 150 minutes are split into 30 minutes each day of physical education for every kid. These are minimums. From there, teachers are encouraged to embed physical activity into classroom lessons and brain breaks, as well as provide additional recess. Here's how we make sure every child gets at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity:

- Mandated 30 minutes physical education daily
- Minimum 45 minutes per day of active recess in addition to 30 minutes of physical education
- Intramurals before and after school
- Classroom physical activity breaks throughout the day

MAKE IT EASY

Ultimately, recess and physical activity are at the sole discretion of the classroom teacher. They're busy enough, so I do everything I can to make it easy on them. Sometimes this means I need to get creative. For example, the school district has a TV station. We use it for PE ActVity. Classroom teachers can connect to guided physical activity breaks at any time. We use whatever content people will give us, a lot of which is free. It didn't take much for us to use an existing resource to make it easy for teachers to incorporate physical activity breaks into the classroom. It didn't require any extra training or planning.

MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE

At Miami-Dade County, physical education does not short-change kids with disabilities. Our experience and practice

show that when you implement standards and modify activities appropriately, kids with disabilities get just as good a physical activity experience as anyone else. We have kids with disabilities golfing, sailing and kayaking in a truly integrated way with other kids. It may sound like a difficult thing to implement, but the real key is believing that all kids are able to participate.

MEASURE IT

We measure whatever we can. Wherever it's possible, we give kids pedometers and other tools to measure their activity levels. We also try to be aware of how much they're moving through programs like Go Noodle, and we monitor fitness through the use of FITNESSGRAM.

QUALITY PE

MAKE IT IMPORTANT—ELEVATE PHYSICAL EDUCATION

We've elevated physical education to be on par with other academic subjects, and that's not just something we say. In Miami, we're holding physical education teachers accountable in the same way every other teacher is held accountable to teaching standards and benchmarks. This is important because it helps us to ensure students are getting the cognitive understanding, and becoming physically literate as an outcome of quality physical education—that teachers are teaching what they should be teaching and students are learning it.

We hold PE teachers accountable and evaluate them in exactly the same way we do teachers of Common Core academic subjects. I spent the last three years developing health and physical education assessments for grades K-8 in Florida. This means we now have real benchmarks and standards tied to accountability.

FOCUS ON QUALITY

I've seen programs that have become 'throw out the ball' programs where kids are left to their own devices to play the sport of the day in PE class. This is great for 'free play' time, but physical education needs to serve a much more profound purpose for kids. In Miami, we're looking at the 'quality' in quality physical education. Our standards and benchmarks are focused on teaching foundational movement skills based on exercise physiology and mechanical principles. If that translates to kids kicking a soccer ball, that's great, but we make sure that our PE classes teach kids the right foundational movements to kick that ball safely and effectively.

CREATING A CULTURE OF ACTIVITY

MAKE IT FUN

To start with, we believe physical activity can be fun. That means we incorporate technology wherever we can and encourage adults to join in. We also try to expand the options as much as possible, so we've moved beyond the traditional soccer and basketball. Now we have programs for paddleboarding, sailing, netball and girls' flag football, to name a few.

BE A ROLE MODEL

I see myself as an advocate for quality physical education and developing a culture of healthy schools, students and staff. I just happen to be doing it district-wide, for a very large school district. We do a lot of training and professional development, so we take advantage of every teacher workday and I regularly hold professional development sessions. At one point, I even got a grant to work with pre-K and Head Start teachers because we found that 36 percent of our 3- and 4-year-olds were already overweight

and obese. So we started training our pre-K and Head Start teachers to deliver physical activity lessons.

Always look for opportunities for kids to be active. We also integrate physical activity into every school program we possibly can. For example, we're currently in the process of providing mobile devices to our students, enabling them to become a part of the digital age in physical education. Other schools are doing the same thing. The difference for Miami-Dade schools is that all of our schools see the opportunity to get kids moving. Our PE TV station and other video content are available online so students can do activities at home with their parents as well.

We also leave some things up to the schools. So, for example, with active learning we ask our physical education teachers to work with classroom teachers to develop safe, appropriate content, but what that looks like is at each school's discretion.



IMPACT

- Reduced absenteeism: 32% decrease in the number of days kids were absent after we implemented the 'I Can Do It, You Can Do It' fitness program for students with intellectual and physical disabilities, visual and hearing impairments and autism. The study observed 1,200 students in 45 different schools.
- Kids participating in 'I Can Do It, You Can Do It' also showed significantly improved performance on fitness measures. Ability to perform 13% more cardio laps and 83% more push-ups at the conclusion of the program.
- Last year we distributed 1,500 awards to students with disabilities who met guidelines for fitness levels and recommended minutes of daily physical activity.
- At the middle school level (where students are allowed to waive physical education), 94 percent of students take daily physical education.
- By 2016, 100% of Miami-Dade middle and high schools will have wellness centers.

Looking ahead, quality evaluation is one of our highest priorities. In fact, we're just now implementing a measurement including the evaluation program that links FITNESSGRAM with standardized test scores.

QUICK THINGS YOU CAN DO TO CREATE AN ACTIVE SCHOOL

My top tips & advice

IF YOU DON'T HAVE RESOURCES

TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT HOW YOU CAN ALLOCATE YOUR EXISTING RESOURCES AND BUDGET

Most schools I know of are on school-based funding, which means how the money is spent is a school-based decision. School boards and states have different mandates, but a lot of it is at the principal's discretion. If a principal cuts options for physical activity, it's because they don't see the need for it.

THERE'S A LOT THAT CAN BE DONE FOR FREE

You may know of someone who is willing to give you content for delivering physical activity lessons, or you can find many free publicly available resources, like we have. We use JAM (Just A Minute) School Program and GoNoodle to implement and measure physical activity throughout the school day.

EXPLORE OUTSIDE FUNDING

I should point out that my budget is zero. There is absolutely no funding in the school district's annual budget to carry out this work. The important thing is that it didn't stop us. We get grants from federal and foundation sources—often to try new things and implement new technology. We also get support from corporations and local businesses. The money is out there, if you take the time to look for it. For example, explore grants from local or foundation councils, or other organizations looking to pilot new work.

IF YOU DON'T HAVE TIME

MAXIMIZE THE MASTER SCHEDULE

For example, take a look at the times when you have all-teacher meetings or planning sessions. In Miami—and this is the case in many schools—the teachers have planning time each day. There are no kids there during planning time. So that's when we have daily physical education in elementary school. We scheduled it during the teacher planning period. It's the only way we were able to offer 30 minutes of physical education, five days a week, for every single kid.

REPLACE SEATED TIME WITH ACTIVE TIME FOR EXPONENTIAL PAYOFFS

It's not about sitting at your desk with your hands folded anymore. Replace chairs with balance balls and get kids to move throughout the classroom to learn different elements of the curriculum. I have a lot of optimism for the future. The generation of teachers coming in now is open to new ideas of how kids learn. And they've heard this idea that sitting is the new smoking and they don't particularly want to sit at a desk all day either.

IF YOU DON'T HAVE SPACE

There are always options to get kids moving in whatever space you have available. You just need to be creative!

TECHNOLOGY CAN BE REALLY HELPFUL:

None of our elementary schools have gymnasiums. Not one of them. One of the programs we did is JAMmin' Minutes, which are one-minute exercise routines. We converted them to QR codes. So now whenever people see those QR codes, they can scan them to their mobile devices and do a technology-based indoor fitness trail throughout the hallways. We gave each school two iPads (that we secured through a federal grant) so whole groups of students could do the trail, but it also works for anyone with a phone, including adults.

EXPLORE AGREEMENTS WITH NEARBY PARKS

We rely heavily on this strategy. This is critical for PE and sports activities at our most space-constrained schools. In one case where a park is located across the street from a school, we actually have an agreement to close down the street during school hours. We also have community partnerships with golf courses, sailing clubs, local gyms, tennis courts, etc., that provide services at no cost to the students or school district. In addition to solving space issues, it often gives kids access to professional instructors and uses space that might otherwise go underused on weekdays.