

# Exercise Their Minds™

## Tips for Effective Physical Education (PE) Messaging

- ✓ Emphasize strong bi-partisan support for physical education classes, led by properly trained and certified teachers, who incorporate moderate to vigorous physical activity and accommodate kids of all abilities.
- ✓ Describe PE the same way you describe other academic classes offered at school. Use words like program, class, and curriculum.
- ✓ Raise the importance of schools providing frequent and effective physical education classes that back lessons parents want to teach at home about the importance of physical activity.
- ✓ Reinforce the relationship between physical activity and academic performance to justify why schools need to allocate sufficient and safe spaces, resources, and funding for physical education classes.

## Physical Education (PE) Messages (\*Use key messages consistently and repeatedly)

- ★ Girls and boys – no matter where they live or what grade they are in – benefit from physical education.
  - When students get more time for PE they do better physically, mentally and emotionally which is good for kids and good for schools.
  - PE classes teach lifelong healthy habits that will help children grow up into healthier adults with less risk for chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes.
  - We have a responsibility to provide our kids with a truly well-rounded education. And that includes effective PE with trained and certified teachers who incorporate moderate to vigorous physical activity.
- Active kids learn better. When kids are active, they focus more, think more clearly, react to stress more calmly, and perform and behave better in class. That means higher test scores across the board.
- For far too many students—especially those living in low-income communities and communities of color—physical education programs don’t exist. This puts them at greater risk for poor health. PE must be equally and consistently provided to all kids in all grades no matter where they live or go to school.

## Language to Emphasize/Language to Avoid

Messages that resonate best are clear and simple. They use everyday language free of jargon and communicate shared values and emotion. Below you’ll find a list of words/phrases Voices for Healthy Kids encourages you to use (left-hand column) when talking about physical education. Language in the right-hand column includes terms and phrases not as easily understood or impactful when looking to engage your audience.

Use This Language	Instead of This Language
✓ Physical education	✗ Gym
✓ PE teacher, PE class	✗ Gym teacher, Gym class, Coach
✓ Academic, program, class, curriculum	✗ Extracurricular, elective
✓ Minutes of PE per day	✗ Minutes of PE per week
✓ Help kids grow up at a healthy weight	✗ Prevent childhood obesity
✓ Eating healthy and being physically active helps prevent diabetes and heart disease	✗ Eating healthy and being physically active helps prevent childhood obesity

## Tips for Effective Messaging to Support Public Policy Change

- 1 Connect with supporters.**

When communicating to gain support for policy, systems, and environmental changes that help kids grow up at a healthy weight, it is important to use language that will move people to take action. By framing your message in a way that paints a picture of how the current environment makes it difficult, if not impossible, to make healthy choices, you can create a sense of urgency and the need to take action. Make sure to clarify that the change and action you're calling for is about transforming environments to make it easy for people to eat healthy and be physically active and less about creating personal behavior change.
- 2 Use the right words.**

While obesity is a chronic disease, most people still think of it as a personal problem with a personal solution. They believe if someone is obese or overweight, that person just needs to eat less and be more physically active. They don't immediately see the need for public policy solutions. However, when talking about people facing obesity-related diseases like diabetes and heart disease, most people agree that we need to work together to find a solution to the problem. Avoid using "obesity" and instead emphasize the health threats posed by heart disease and/or diabetes.
- 3 Emphasize choice.**

People are most supportive of healthy changes if they don't fear their choices will be limited. When talking about adding healthy options, stress the array of overall choices offered to people, especially parents who we are here to support, so the focus is not on the removal of unhealthy options.
- 4 Use the right messenger.**

Messages are only as strong as the person delivering them. Is the person delivering the message credible? Are they representative of the community most affected? Do they have personal experience related to the issue? Are they respected by the audience? The best messenger needs to be determined for each situation and location. For example, when messaging on health issues, the best messenger could be a doctor, a nurse, or a patient. Make informed decisions about the most culturally appropriate messenger on an issue.
- 5 Stress consumer education as ONE piece of the puzzle.**

People believe education is the best way to encourage behavior change. But helping all children grow up at a healthy weight is a complex challenge and education is only one part of the solution. Reinforce consumer education as key to awareness building about the problem and solutions, but emphasize other initiatives that drive system-wide policy change. For example, with tobacco use, warning labels did a great deal to educate consumers but the change in norms and dramatic drops in smoking rates happened when environmental changes happened like prohibiting the sale to minors and making workplaces smoke-free.
- 6 Alleviate skepticism and build trust.**

People are very skeptical of government and framing our solutions only from that lens can prevent us from getting our message through to key audiences. Introduce policy, systems, and environmental change efforts to the public with words like "services," "resources," "partnerships," as people are more inclined to embrace this terminology instead of "regulations," "mandates," "bans," "funding," and "government."