

# Carol M. White Physical Education Program



Girl Scouts of the USA  
420 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10018-2728  
Phone (212) 852-8000  
FAX (212) 852-6515  
misc@gsusa.org  
www.girlscouts.org



Girls Inc.  
120 Wall Street  
New York, NY 10005-3902  
Phone (212) 509-2000  
FAX (212) 509-8708  
communications@girlsinc.org  
www.girlsinc.org



National Association for  
Girls & Women in Sport  
1900 Association Drive  
Reston, VA 20191  
Phone (703) 476-3450  
FAX (703) 476-4566  
nagws@aahperd.org  
www.aahperd.org/nagws



National Women's Law Center  
11 Dupont Circle NW, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone (202) 588-5180  
FAX: (202) 588-5185  
www.nwlc.org



Women's Sports Foundation  
Eisenhower Park  
1899 Hempstead Turnpike, Ste. 400  
East Meadow, NY 11554  
Phone (516) 542-4700  
FAX (516) 542-4716  
info@WomensSportsFoundation.org

The “Carol M. White Physical Education Program” is the only federal program that supports physical education. As part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (PL 107-110), its purpose is to “begin, develop, and improve physical education programs for all kindergarten through 12th-grade students.”<sup>1</sup> The National Girls and Women in Sports Day Coalition supports this program and an increased investment in quality physical education in the U.S.

Obesity is on the rise in the United States, and one in three children is overweight or obese.<sup>2</sup> Most health organizations suggest that children should receive 60 minutes per day of physical activity, but most children do not meet that goal.

- **Health risks related to obesity.** In children and youth, obesity is associated with many health risks, including cardiovascular disease, asthma, Type-2 diabetes, and psychosocial issues, such as low self-esteem and bullying.<sup>3</sup> One recent study has estimated the healthcare cost of obesity to be as high as \$147 billion per year.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, studies have shown that when children are healthy they learn better, achieve more academically, and have better attitudes about education.<sup>5</sup>
- **Benefits of physical education programs.** Fully 61.5% of children aged 9-13 do not participate in any organized physical activity outside of school, so P.E. provides a vital (and perhaps sole) opportunity for skill building and exercise.<sup>6</sup> Physical education programs have both physical and mental health benefits, and are linked to future physical activity.<sup>7</sup> P.E. and extra-curricular physical activity are both associated with improved academic performance, according to the Centers for Disease Control.<sup>8</sup>
- **Particular benefits to girls.** In addition to the above health and academic benefits, physical activity is associated with higher self-confidence in girls.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, girls are less physically active than boys. According to the CDC, vigorous activity is significantly less common among high school girls (24.8%) than boys (49.6%).<sup>10</sup> Girls’ P.E. participation is generally less frequent and of a lower intensity than boys’.<sup>11</sup> A lack of successful physical activity experiences during their formative years has consequences for girls' activity levels into adulthood and for illnesses such as heart disease and osteoporosis, which disproportionately affects women.<sup>12</sup>

The Carol White Physical Education Program (PEP) promotes health and physical activity by supporting grants directly to local education agencies and community-based organizations for physical education. Grants may support equipment, staff, or teacher professional development, and have been used for intramurals, curriculum and facility improvements, heart-rate testing, and nutrition education.<sup>13</sup> PEP was funded at \$78 million in FY2009 and \$79 million in FY2010, allowing for only 10% of applicants to be funded.<sup>14</sup>

The National Girls and Women in Sports Day Coalition calls on Congress to preserve PEP in the ESEA reauthorization and increase appropriations for this important program. The recent bipartisan approval of the Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization (S.3307) invested \$4.5 billion in better child health outcomes through nutrition. Congress should make an equivalent investment in physical activity to improve child health now and in the future.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> PL 107-110, 107th Cong., Public Law 427, (2001) (enacted), Print. Section 5501.
- <sup>2</sup> "Understanding Childhood Obesity," *www.heart.org* American Heart Association, 2010 Web 10 January 2011, <[http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@fc/documents/downloadable/ucm\\_304175.pdf](http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@fc/documents/downloadable/ucm_304175.pdf)>.
- <sup>3</sup> "Obesity and Overweight for Professionals: Childhood: Consequences, DNPAO CDC," *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, 20 October 2009, Web, 11 January 2011, <<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/consequences.html>>.
- <sup>4</sup> "Obesity Healthcare Costs US 147 Billion Dollars a Year, New Study," *Medical News Today: Health News*, 28 July 2009, Web, 24 January 2011, <<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/158948.php>>.
- <sup>5</sup> Symons, C. W., Cinelli, B., James, T. C. and Groff, P. (1997), Bridging Student Health Risks and Academic Achievement Through Comprehensive School Health Programs. *Journal of School Health*, 67: 220–227. doi: 10.1111/j.1746-1561.1997.tb06309.x. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1746-1561.1997.tb06309.x/abstract>.
- <sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2003) Physical activity levels among children aged 9-13 years—United States, 2002. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 52(SS-33): 785-788. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5233a1.htm>
- <sup>7</sup> National Association for Sport and Physical Education and American Heart Association. (2010). *2010 Shape of the Nation Report: Status of physical education in the USA*. Reston, VA.
- <sup>8</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). *The association between school based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health\\_and\\_academics/pdf/pa-pe\\_paper.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/pa-pe_paper.pdf)
- <sup>9</sup> Catelli, Linda, "Bottom of the Ninth: Girls, Physical Education, and Literature," Web. 14 January 2011, <<http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/professional-development/childlit/books/CATELLI.pdf>>.
- <sup>10</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011). Youth Online: High School YRBS. Physically active 5 Days: All Locations: All Years. Retrieved from <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/> The High School Youth Risk Behavior survey defines vigorous physical activity as activity that increases the heart rate and causes the participant to breathe hard some of the time.
- <sup>11</sup> Fairclough, S., and G. Stratton, "Improving Health-enhancing Physical Activity in Girls' Physical Education," *Oxford Journals Medicine Health Education Research*,. 17 Oct. 2004, Web. 18 January, 2011. Retrieved from <<http://her.oxfordjournals.org/content/20/4/448.full>>
- <sup>12</sup> Beveridge, Sandy, and Philip Scruggs "TLC For Better PE: Girls And Elementary Physical Education - Research and Read Books, Journals, Articles at Questia Online Library," *Questia - The Online Library of Books and Journals*. OPERD--The Journal of Physical Education, 2000, Web, 13 January. 2011. <<http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst?docId=5002368952>>.
- <sup>13</sup> "2010 Awards -- Carol M. White Physical Education Program." *U.S. Department of Education*. 10 Oct. 2010. Web. 25 Jan. 2011. <<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/2010awards.html>>.
- <sup>14</sup> United States of America. U.S. Department of Education. *Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Summary*. Print.