

These students just can't sit still in school all day

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Fourth-graders (from left) Makenzie Thompson, Reagan Lloyd and Jayda Smith use exercise bands in a program after school at Stonewall Tell Elementary School, Sept. 9, 2013, in College Park, Ga. Stonewall's exercise program is not new, but it just won a gold award from the state for its efforts to get kids moving and be healthy. Photo: Kent D. Johnson/Atlanta Journal-Constitution/MCT

ATLANTA — Last April, officials in Georgia asked schools to do something important. They wanted them to add 30 minutes of exercise into the school day.

The state pointed out that only 16 percent of Georgia's students had passed five tests of physical fitness. The tests measured flexibility and weight. They also tested how well students can run without getting tired and how many push-ups and curl-ups students could do.

One in five students could not pass even a single test.

Many children in the state are [obese](https://www.newsela.com/?tag=obesity) — that is, they are very overweight. And they are also weak. So the message was simple. Schools had to find a way to get kids moving more.

"Tiger Tune Ups" In The Morning

The new exercise time is not meant to take the place of recess or gym class, though. Schools are supposed to work the exercise into the rest of the school day.

Georgia schools have heard the call. More than 100 have added at least 30 minutes of exercise. There are yoga classes before school starts and walking and running clubs after school. They even include 10-minute exercise breaks at students' desks.

Huntley Hills Elementary School is one of those schools. It now has what it calls "Tiger Tune Ups" in the morning. Kids can play in the gym before class starts. They can use everything from hula hoops to plastic balls. On "Walking Wednesdays," students walk laps in the gym while popular music plays.

But what's most popular is the new after-school bike program on Thursdays. That has kids asking "Is it Thursday yet?" They ask this every day.

Some kids bring their bikes to school. Others use bikes the school bought for them. Kids ride around an empty parking lot or field by the school.

Kids don't just work up a sweat. Some learn how to ride a bike through the program.

"Diary Of A Wimpy Kid Tag"

Exercise also gets a lot of attention at Stonewall Tell Elementary School. The school is one of 51 that recently received a gold medal. It was given for helping fight childhood obesity.

Lisa Sinon teaches physical education (PE) at Stonewall Tell. She is getting pedometers for every student. These measure how much kids walk. They will be used to encourage them to take 10,000 steps every day.

Sinon also wants to make sure kids have fun in PE class. She often brings out a cart full of plastic balls. Then, she lets kids make up their own games.

A group of kids recently invented a game called "Diary of a Wimpy Kid tag." They named it after the popular children's book series. Now they play the game at recess.

Sinon has come up with several other fun and healthy things to do. These include a family fitness night. Children and their parents climb rocks and sample tasty salads.

No Cupcakes Allowed

Sinon is not the only one encouraging healthy living. Other teachers help keep junk food out of school. For example, cupcakes are not allowed, even on birthdays.

“If a parent brings cupcakes, he or she will be stopped at the front desk,” said Sinon. Now “parents are bringing beautiful and delicious fruit platters. And the kids like them.”

Exercise is a way to lose weight. But there is something else good about it: Children who exercise seem to do better in school.

Take Makenzie Thompson, a fourth-grader at Stonewall Tell. She says exercising makes a difference.

“If I exercise after school and then do my homework, it only takes me 30 minutes,” she said. “But if I don’t exercise and just go directly to do my homework, it takes me an hour.”

Quiz

- 1 What is the main idea of the article?
 - (A) Students cannot pass any of the physical fitness tests.
 - (B) Students are learning yoga and bike riding skills at school.
 - (C) In Georgia, 51 schools received a gold medal for exercising.
 - (D) In Georgia, schools have been asked to add exercise to the school day.

- 2 What is another good title for this article?
 - (A) Tiger Tune Ups
 - (B) Making PE Fun
 - (C) Students Get More Exercise
 - (D) The Exercise and Homework Connection

- 3 Which is the BEST summary of the article?
 - (A) Students invented a new game named "After a Book Series."
 - (B) Teachers decided that kids should stop eating junk food at school.
 - (C) Parents learned to bring healthier snacks to school for their children.
 - (D) Schools created fun programs to add more exercise to students' days.

- 4 Select the sentence that sums up the main idea at the end of the article.

Answer Key

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