



## Why Link Physical Activity with Reading?

Literacy is critical for children to be successful in a world where information is one of the most important resources. Physical activity is critical to a child's health in a world where too much television and video time are contributing to an increasingly sedentary lifestyle. Physical inactivity contributes to childhood obesity and also results in an increased prevalence of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and several other chronic conditions.

Research shows that children who are physically active are not only healthier, but perform better academically. Daily physical activity has positive effects on student performance and academic achievement in terms of memory, observation, problem-solving and decision-making. As well, it significantly improves attitudes, discipline, behaviours and creativity.\*

A recent study of nearly one million California students also shows the strong positive correlation between physical fitness and academic performance.\*\* Encouraging children to “read and move” can contribute to success both in the health and the academic areas.

Among very young children, there is a strong connection between motor competence and self-esteem.\*\*\*. For the younger age group, there is a natural link between physical activity and reading. Children are particularly interested in stories and books that describe or depict things that are connected to their own daily lives such as playing sports, being active with their families or engaging in active leisure pursuits.

Books and physical activity are invaluable for children and youth of all ages.

\* Source: The Effects of Regular Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity on Student Outcomes: A Review. Canadian Journal of Public Health, Vol. 86, No. 1., 1995.

\*\* Source: “State Study Proves Physically Fit Kids Perform Better Academically”, California Department of Education News Release, Dec., 2002.

\*\*\* Source: Physical Activity and the Very Young Child, Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA).

