



## Back to school: Longer school days and less PE

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Last week President Obama addressed the nation's K-12 students with a broadcast speech reinforcing the value of education. Lesson plans provided to be used after the speech challenge students to identify something each might do to positively impact their own learning and the nation. That same week, students in Oregon will return for the 2009-2010 school year. For many there will be a 4-day school week, cuts in PE, longer school days, fewer sports opportunities and more "chair time."



President Obama's challenge to "work hard" generally translates to "work hard, focus and be productive while in your desk so you can succeed at learning." In spite of the federal government's stimulus funding and a solid verbal commitment to education, the message seems confusing. Busy classroom teachers are dealing with the challenge of improving standardized test scores and student performance at the same time the very subject students may need most is cut - PE. [Recent brain research has solidly proven a direct connection between physical activity, regular movement breaks throughout a school day and academic success.](#) [The brain needs oxygen exactly like a car needs fuel.](#)

Getting students out of the desk and up and moving on a regular basis throughout the school day could deliver exactly the focus, productivity and academic success we all hope for. Aerobic exercise sends oxygen to the brain, creates more neurotransmitters (pathways between neurons) and BDNF - exactly the chemical needed for cognitive success. [Extending the school day while cutting PE is a counterintuitive move](#) - don't you think? Creative teachers and those comfortable teaching fitness and providing exercise breaks may be able to provide the physical activity students need. [Some have added exergames](#) - technology delivered activity - to the classroom. This piecemeal approach leaves many students with a more sedentary school day than is ideal for optimal learning, focus and productivity.

Do you have a student impacted by less or no PE in K-12? Do you have a comment or idea that might be valuable to busy teachers? Please share your thoughts with us.

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