

Help Kids Move with Active Schools

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When smart people come together and combine their collective strengths and resources, anything is possible. And with so many important players working to transform the school environment,

aligning efforts and assets is a critical catalyst to progress.

Since our inception, GENYOUth has always advocated for collaboration among a network of influencers with shared goals. Just last week, we convened our second Leadership Roundtable, a small gathering to spark ideas and action. We left the room with a sense of tremendous accomplishment, thanks to the leaders in government, business, education, health and wellness and stellar Student Ambassadors from our Flagship Program, Fuel Up to Play 60, who brought their unique perspectives and insights to bear to support students and schools.

Today, I'm thrilled to announce what is perhaps the most exciting result of all our collective efforts to date: Let's Move! Active Schools -- First Lady Michelle Obama's new initiative to help America's students get moving again. Together, nine diverse organizations with a variety of experiences and backgrounds are committing 70 million dollars over the next five years to help America's kids be more active in the places in which they live, learn and play.

The median physical education budget for schools in the United States is only [\\$764 per school year](#). That's unacceptable. As a mother of four young children, I feel both tremendous urgency and passion for this effort, and the steps Let's Move! Active Schools is taking to get more kids moving every day. My husband Oren and I have three boys (Logan, Kyle and Slate), and our newest addition, a baby girl named Jade. Our kids are our lifeline, and as the CEO of a nonprofit working directly with and in schools, they are also a constant motivator that we must make every effort to nurture and grow healthy kids who thrive in school and beyond.

Studies show that kids need at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day to stay healthy, and regular physical activity has been shown to improve classroom attendance and behavior. It may, in fact, boost test scores by up to 40%, demonstrating the "learning connection" -- the crucial link between quality nutrition, physical activity and academic performance.

After just 20 minutes of physical activity, children experience improved cognitive function and higher academic achievement. A child's brain literally lights up from the stimulation. If we don't leverage science like this to reverse the trend of inactivity, we run the risk of long-term negative consequences that will ultimately affect the health and vibrancy of our nation's youth both now and when they become adults. The science behind the learning connection gives moms like me simple, actionable ways to rally for our children's health.

Let's Move! Active Schools mobilizes "School Champions" -- P.E. teachers, classroom teachers, administrators, staff and parents -- who are ready and willing to be leaders for their school community. School champions go to LetsMoveSchools.org and follow a simple, six-step process that includes building a team, conducting a basic school assessment and creating a customized action plan. Participating schools have access to free tools and resources, ranging from in-person trainings to program activation grants powered by Fuel Up to Play 60's existing grant infrastructure, and direct personal assistance from certified professionals.

In order to help our children be more physically active, we need to give them the means and the access to do so every day, before, during and after school. We all recognize the mounting obstacles and pressure that many schools face in keeping physical activity on a child's calendar, and that by joining forces, we are that much stronger and more likely to achieve our lofty and ambitious goals.

When I go home to my kids every day, I'm proud to tell them about what mom's working on, and the incredible people and organizations she's working with to help them be their greatest, healthiest selves. Nothing beats the looks on their faces when they hear I'm doing everything in my power to make sure every kid attends an "active" school and gets their 60 minutes of activity in for the day. I see how physical activity ignites their minds and insights their passion. Being active has taught them how to use their imagination to collaborate and motivate one another, commit to a common goal, develop friendships, overcome obstacles and pursue their dreams.

They are my small army of champions for physical activity, and if you're a parent, a teacher, a student, or someone who's experienced the natural high of physical activity, I implore you to learn more about how you can help the Let's Move! Active Schools coalition of change makers recruit even more champions of change.

Exercise your influence because it starts with YOU!