

California

Let's Move! Child Care applauds Chico State for increasing opportunities in preschool physical activity

Posted by Pamela Bryant, Health Communications Specialist, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on March 21, 2014 on Let's Move Blog

California State University at Chico (Chico State) has made great strides with a two-year grant from the California Department of Health's Obesity Prevention Program (COPP). Chico State is putting policy into action and helping to prevent obesity in low-income preschool settings. Through its [Center for Nutrition and Activity Promotion \(CNAP\)](#), Chico State has worked with child care facilities and organizations and early education staff to implement best practices for physical activity. It has also conducted pilot research on an inexpensive solution to help children increase physical activity and burn more energy on the playground.



Kids enjoy taking tricycle laps around a stencil-painted playground track (Photo Credit: Chico State University, CNAP)

Chico State's CNAP partnered with preschools in its community of Butte County to enhance physical activity opportunities for low-income children. CNAP joined with four preschool agencies who serve over 300 children in 8 preschools to adopt the recommendations from [Preventing Childhood Obesity in Early Care and Education Programs \(2010\)](#). Together, with teacher involvement, they created and implemented policies and practices in these centers that support standards for physical activity, playing outdoors, and caregivers/teachers' encouragement of physical activity.

Survey responses from the participating child care centers were favorable and showed that the preschool policy project helped staff learn the strategies and recommendations. The teachers commented they had incorporated new ideas into daily play, such as obstacle courses, hoops, tunnels, and other portable play equipment, as well as using exercise videos for rainy days and free play.

Chico State produced a [photo diary](#) to capture the work and lessons learned through this project. In addition to discussing the best practices, barriers, and opportunities for improvement, the team discovered that putting policy into action

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takes time and commitment from teachers and administration. Creating the policy with staff became a teaching tool itself.

Chico State also took an artistic approach to preventing childhood obesity, finding that reusable playground stencils are an inexpensive solution to increase physical activity for preschoolers. Through funding from COPP, Chico State's CNAP partnered with the Glenn County Office of Education (California) to pilot the use of inexpensive and reusable playground stencils to enhance physical activity opportunities for low-income preschoolers. The goal was to determine if strategically painting preschool playgrounds using the stencils would increase the amount of energy the children would use when playing outdoors.

The playground stencils were designed to enhance movement and gross motor development for preschoolers. They included a painted track for wheeled toys, a bulls-eye for tossing skills, scattered shapes and various hopscotch patterns for jumping, hopping, and leaping and ball bouncing, animals with activity words for teacher-led activities, a figure eight for balancing, and a variety of pathways for balancing and crossing the midline (brain development). Data collected comparing a playground with the stencil art to one that did not have the art found that more energy expenditure was observed in the playground with stencil art activities.



A colorful stenciled alphabet path for children to hop, run, and walk
(Photo Credit: Chico State University, CNAP)

We want to feature your story of progress and success working on the five *Let's Move!* Child Care goals. Please email a brief description of your story with your contact information, including program name, city and state, to eceobesity@cdc.gov with the subject heading "Program Success Story."