Health experts recommend children and youth get at least 60 minutes of active play or physical activity every day. But Wisconsin’s youth are failing to meet that minimum. The state’s Department of Public Instruction created Active Schools Core 4+ to increase daily opportunities for activity for our children in schools. The program is Wisconsin’s version of Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP), an approach created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Now, ANCHOR is building partnerships statewide to carry out and expand Active Schools Core 4+. More than 20 schools have expressed interest, and eight elementary schools from eight different districts so far have agreed to send a representative to be trained in the Active Schools strategies and to increase physical activity opportunities throughout the day.

The Challenge
Less than 50 percent of Wisconsin youth are active at least 60 minutes a day, five days a week. Another 13 percent are not active at least 60 minutes a day at any point during the week. Wisconsin elementary students spend approximately 1,000 hours a year in school, during which the majority of their time is in sedentary learning, contributing to physical inactivity. The potential impacts of increasing activity throughout the school day are great. A 2013 Journal of Pediatrics study concluded that fit kids are more likely to pass math and reading tests. Along with improved academic performance, increased physical activity may also help decrease behavioral issues.

“The ability to work closely with schools increases the capacity for childhood obesity prevention through policy and environmental change.”
- Eileen Hare, consultant for Health Education, Physical Education, Coordinated School Health for Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Work made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
**The Solution**

Increasing the opportunities for physical activity in school is key to helping more Wisconsin youth reach the recommended amount of daily physical activity and boost their chances for a healthy adulthood. Active Schools Core 4+ provides ample opportunities for small amounts of physical activity throughout the day – and with Wisconsin schools facing budget cuts and ever tightening school schedules, short stints of activity throughout the day are necessary to increase activity levels. Currently, the Department of Public Instruction provides trainings and support for the Active Schools Core 4+ strategies, offering them to targeted school districts. Wisconsin ANCHOR and its partners are expanding this work to include additional schools in the Fox Valley and in Crawford County.

**Sustaining Success**

Partners are spreading the word so that more schools can become trained in Active Schools Core 4+ strategies, and a school-based initiative is helping drive this success. By becoming trained, schools become a champion, a model for their district that, in turn, encourages other schools to be trained. Part of the process is for schools to communicate with parents both what the strategies are and why they are beneficial. With parent and community support, schools will be empowered to begin or continue using the Active Schools strategies to increase activity levels for students.

**Policy, System and Environmental Change**

The ANCHOR initiative trains schools in the Active Schools Core 4+ strategies and creates system change within the school environment. The school is better able to increase daily physical activity opportunities, as well as increase the amount of time children are active each and every day. The goal is for a culture of health to spread from individual students and school staff to families and communities.

**Results**

The initiative encountered overwhelming support and interest, with more than 20 schools requesting to participate within one week of receiving information. Seeing such a positive response is exciting, and it has resulted in designing an implementation approach where eight different school districts will benefit.

**Get Involved**

Connect with your local school district and talk to them about the importance of regular, daily opportunities for students to be physically active. Explore CSPAP and Wisconsin’s version, the Active Schools Core 4+, to get more ideas. These opportunities are crucial to ensuring the health and academic success of future generations; community support can help make this a reality.