Only one in three children are physically active every day. Because children spend a large portion of their waking hours in the classroom, schools provide an important place where they can increase physical activity levels, while learning active, healthy habits that can last a lifetime. Oregon Kids Move with Heart is working with the Beaverton School District to pilot innovative strategies to increase physical education and activity opportunities for students in kindergarten through the eighth grade. Participating elementary schools now begin their day with a 10-minute brain-boosting activity, while middle school student take daily physical education classes. The changes have resulted in fewer disciplinary problems and more engaged learning. This effort is part of a larger movement to help schools meet a minimum physical education requirement that takes effect throughout Oregon with the 2017-2018 school year. This law will require at least 150 minutes of physical education per week at all elementary schools, and 225 minutes per week at middle schools.

The Challenge

Inactive children tend to grow up to become inactive adults, who are more likely to develop chronic illnesses. Diabetes, heart disease and stroke are the leading contributors to disability and death in Oregon. Combined, they affect one in seven residents and cost $1.5 billion in hospitalizations each year. Schools provide the best opportunity for children to get physical activity, as well as learn how to adopt healthy lifestyles. But many schools have seen their physical education programs slashed by budget cuts or hampered by limited gym space and outdoor fields. Currently, Oregon elementary school students average about 75 minutes of physical education per week; middle school students get about 135 minutes per week. Both averages fall far short of what the state will require at the start of the 2017-2018 school year.

“Having the students get up and be active when they are starting to lose focus really helps them get back on track. They are much more engaged within 10 seconds of sitting back down.”

- Sam Marshall, Highland Park Middle School physical education/health teacher
The Solution
Oregon Kids Move with Heart is working with the Beaverton School District to increase quality physical education and activity opportunities throughout the school day for K-8 students. This collaborative partnership is providing inspirational and creative ways for teachers to meet the upcoming physical education mandate. The current school year began with teachers getting multimedia instructional aids and materials through a “Physical Activity Toolkit” that suggests ways to incorporate physical activity into the classroom. Three elementary schools participating in an Active Students Pilot program begin their day with ten minutes of brain-boosting activity – such as chair push-ups or dancing to videos – while the one middle school participant incorporates brain boosts in its health classes.

Sustaining Success
The Active Students Task Force, created by Beaverton’s school board to support district implementation of the physical education requirements, will expand its pilot program to include additional schools and also focus on school sports and movement throughout the school day. Teachers will work to improve the Physical Activity Toolkit.

Policy, System and Environmental Change
In 2007, the Oregon governor signed into law House Bill 3141, an important step toward improving the health of children. The measure requires K-5 students to receive 150 minutes of physical education per week and students in grades 6-8 to receive a minimum of 225 minutes per week. At least 50 percent of the required physical education class time must be actual physical activity, with as much time as possible spent in “moderate” activity. Schools were given 10 years to implement the law. Oregon Kids Move with Heart continues to provide technical assistance toward successful implementation of the physical education requirements.

Results
This collaboration provided 1,505 elementary students and 815 middle school students with increased physical activity throughout the school day. The three elementary schools in the pilot program begin the day with 10 minutes of brain-boosting activity, and have added recess before lunch. At Beaverton’s Highland Park Middle School, students engage in 59 minutes of physical activity each day, for a total 295 minutes per week. The school also added a physical activity break before lunch, giving students about 12 minutes for movement before they sit down to eat. Middle school students, who are enrolled in health education class for six weeks of the school year, also receive physically active “brain boosts” throughout the class. All of the additional activity has resulted in improved behavior, fewer disciplinary referrals and more engaged learning among students, according to teacher reports.

Get Involved
Visit www.heart.org/OregonKidsMoveWithHeart to learn more about the project. You can also join in the conversation and show support by tagging tweets with #BSDBrainBoost and #ORKidsMoveWithHeart