Active kids are better learners. They stay focused longer, earn higher test scores and have better attendance records. They also are more likely to be more mentally and emotionally healthy. Quality physical education programs have the potential to help children maintain active lives. The American Heart Association’s Accelerating National Community Health Outcomes through Reinforcing (ANCHOR) Partnership Program, Oregon Kids Move with Heart, worked with the Salem-Keizer School District to provide physical education teachers a day of professional development full of best practice techniques, resources and ideas to help keep children moving during school hours. Quality physical education has the potential to teach children healthy, active habits that can stay with them for a lifetime.

The Challenge

The prevalence of overweight youth has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents in the past 30 years. One in three youth ages 2-19 are overweight, making them more susceptible to developing pre-diabetes, high blood pressure and other factors for cardiovascular disease. They also are at greater risk for social and emotional problems including stigmatization and poor self-esteem. Inactive, overweight children are also likely to grow up to become sedentary adults: In Oregon, about 1 in 5 adults are physically inactive.

The state’s education department reports that during the 2013-14 school year, kindergarten-fifth graders received an average of only 40 to 74 minutes of physical education instruction a week. Sixth-eighth graders received 141 to 154 minutes of such instruction per week. Both averages fall short of the minimum physical education requirements that Oregon will require at the start of the 2017 academic school year.

"What Alex O’Briend presented has been easy to implement, and his enthusiasm lit our fire to jump start and kick off the school year."
– Diana Wanek, elementary physical education teacher in the Salem-Keizer School District

Work made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
The Solution
The American Heart Association’s partnership initiative, Oregon Kids Move with Heart, organized a professional development session for physical education teachers of the Salem-Keizer School District on Aug. 31, 2016. The workshop provided strategies for boosting physical activity among students during physical education classes, as well as ideas and games to help integrate lessons about nutrition, anatomy and overall wellness. The training took place a week before the start of the academic school year and was part of an effort to prepare schools for a state physical education policy that will take effect in the 2017/18 school year. Students from kindergarten to fifth grade will be required to get 150 minutes of physical education per week under the new policy, while middle school students must get a minimum of 225 minutes per week. At least 50 percent of the physical education class must include actual physical activity, with as much of it held at a “moderate” level.

Sustaining Success
Oregon Kids Move with Heart plans to bring in additional experts for two more professional development workshops planned for teachers in January and April of 2017. Those sessions will build upon the lessons provided during the first training, and will be open to all teachers interested in finding ways to boost physical activity levels among their students.

Policy, System and Environmental Change
The professional development guidance provided to Salem-Keizer teachers will prepare them for the implementation of the new policy by involving physical education during class time. The training encouraged teachers to share best practices involving how to get kids moving more throughout the day. District administrators continue to lend their support to the effort.

Results
On Aug. 31, 2016, Focused Fitness, an organization known for their best-practices curriculum and highly engaging trainings, led a three-hour workshop with 79 physical education teachers, providing them with strategies for increasing daily movement among students. The training allowed for shared ideas to incorporate academic content such as anatomy and dietary science into class lessons through games and other fun and creative ways. “Along with moderate to vigorous physical activities, he also included nutrition content that is fantastic and easily incorporated,” said Jane Morris, an elementary school physical education teacher in the Salem-Keizer district. “I am excited to implement these activities into my teaching curriculum!” All of the strategies can help increase physical activity for students and improve their concentration, memory and behavior, as well as give them knowledge about nutrition and healthy habits that can stay with them for a lifetime.

Get Involved
Learn more about the benefits of physical education and ongoing initiatives to increase physical activity opportunities for students by going to OregonKidsMoveWithHeart.com and clicking on the “show your support” link.