Because children spend a large portion of each weekday in the classroom, schools provide a unique opportunity for them to get daily physical activity. We know that active kids make for better learners. They stay focused longer, score higher on tests and are less likely to exhibit behavioral problems. The American Heart Association collaborated with the Salem-Keizer School District to host a professional development workshop for physical education teachers. The professional development training taught teachers a variety of approaches they can adopt to increase the amount of movement children get in physical education class through fun and engaging activities that often don’t even feel like exercise. Oregon, like the nation, is trying to lower childhood obesity rates. Providing students with quality physical education that instills healthy, active habits can help with that goal.

The Challenge

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. At the current pace, 467,643 cases of diabetes and 989,454 cases of hypertension are projected by 2030 in Oregon. These youth are also at greater risk for social and emotional problems including stigmatization and poor self-esteem. Inactive, overweight children are more likely to grow up to become sedentary adults. Oregon currently has the 22nd highest adult obesity rate in the nation, with about 1,500 residents dying each year as a result.

“The activities Jim DeLine shared were easy to implement and were a hit with students. Many activities increased students' motivation to move and focused on working cooperatively with their peers”.

– Scott Johnston, Salem-Keizer elementary physical education teacher
The Solution
The American Heart Association’s Accelerating National Community Health Outcomes through Reinforcing (ANCHOR) Partnership program organized a professional development workshop on April 28, 2017. Physical education teachers from the Salem-Keizer School District were invited to the professional development training, “What’s in Your WALLET: Wonderful Activities Learners Like Every Time.” Led by Jim DeLine, a 30-year veteran in health and physical education, the training provided examples of how to empower students with skills that can help them stay active for a lifetime. The training also emphasized that physical activity should be thought of as something to enjoy and used as a confidence lifter. A variety of creative activities designed to maximize skill development, increase activity time, and boost student fitness were introduced during the workshop, which also addressed how to integrate academic content – including math, science, social studies and language arts – into physical education time.

Sustaining Success
A survey that followed up with training participants found that nearly everyone had shared the lessons they learned and resources they gained with colleagues, administrators and others interested in incorporating more movement into the schedules of children throughout the school day. In addition, Jim DeLine, the facilitator, shared with participants a free, online network that supplements many of the activities he shared with teachers with additional resources and ideas.

Policy, System and Environmental Change
The professional development training provided Salem-Keizer physical education teachers with the tools they need to get kids moving more throughout their day. The physical education teachers learned ways to help students increase both their fitness skills and physical activity levels. This will help the district meet the statewide policy requirements for physical education through a phased-in approach. The statewide policy aims to meet the national physical activity guidelines. Elementary schools will be required to offer 120 minutes per week by the 2019-20 school year and 150 minutes per week by the 2020-21 school year. Middle schools will be required to offer 180 minutes per week by 2021-22 school year and 225 minutes per week by the 2022-23 school year.

Results
About 75 Salem-Keizer physical education teachers who participated in the trainings learned a variety of games that help students get moving immediately, as well as activities that can develop various motor skills and teach cooperation and teamwork. Participants also got ideas for how to incorporate literacy, math and science into their lessons, an increasingly common requirement in physical education classes. The teachers have since taken this new knowledge back to their schools to share with colleagues in a way that has encouraged physical activity beyond the gym. Many of the teachers have ordered new equipment, advocated for increasing physical education to five days a week, and shared with parents and children physical activity ideas that students can do at home. Since taking the training and implementing many of its ideas, teachers have reported tremendous improvements in student behavior, focus, and readiness to learn.

Get Involved
Reach out to your local school administrators and share how much physical education means to your children and your entire family. Encourage school and district leaders to continue providing professional development opportunities for their teachers.