

# The School Health Index

## Physical Activity & Physical Education

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### STUDY OVERVIEW

From October 2017 to March 2019, 69 schools completed a modified version of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) School Health Index (SHI) using the Alliance for a Healthier Generation Healthy Schools Program. The CDC recommends students be physically active for 60 minutes per day, and offers guidelines on recess, movement breaks, and physical education to help meet that goal. ORE examined school responses to the SHI to answer the question: **To what extent do school responses on the SHI indicate alignment with CDC recommendations related to physical education and physical activity?**

### RESULTS (n=69)

- Out of 51 K-5 schools, 57% reported that students receive recess for 20 minutes every day AND that recess monitors encourage students to be physically active. However, 27 K-5 schools (59%) reported that withholding recess as punishment is **not** prohibited.
- 26% of schools offer students movement breaks on all or most days during a typical school week.
- Almost half (47%) of K-5 schools report that students receive fewer than 60 minutes per week of physical education (PE).
- Over half of middle and high schools report that students are required to take at least one academic year of PE.
- 78% of schools in our sample report that teachers keep students active for at least 50% of the time during most or all PE classes.

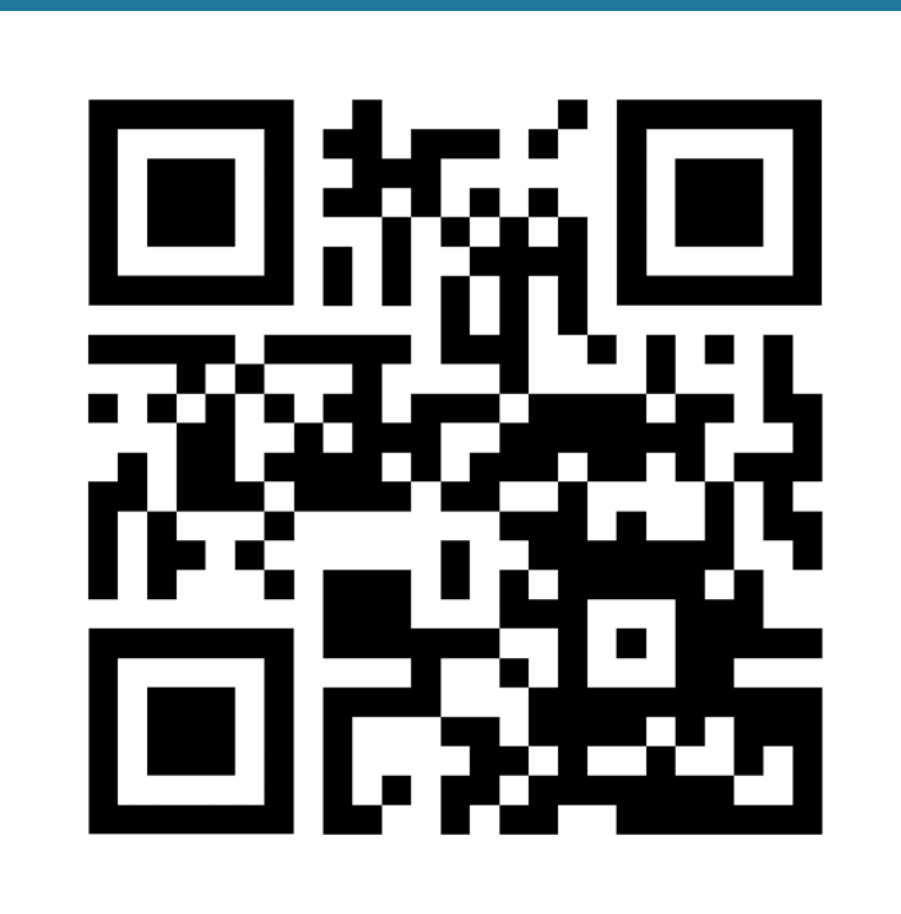
### DISCUSSION

Research shows that students who are physically active have better grades, attendance, cognitive performance, and classroom behaviors.<sup>1</sup> Overall, SHI responses indicate that schools are not always meeting CDC recommendations to offer students opportunities for daily physical activity. SDP has a Wellness Policy<sup>2</sup>, which could offer schools more detailed guidance that aligns with CDC's recommendations on recess, movement breaks, and physical education.

<sup>1</sup>National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health. "Health and Academic Achievement." (2014). [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health\\_and\\_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>For more information on the SDP Wellness Policy, visit <https://www.phillasd.org/foodservices/programs-services/wellness-policy/>

Not all SDP students are offered CDC's recommended amount of daily physical activity through recess, movement breaks, and physical education.



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There are five key **SDP Wellness Policy guidelines** related to physical activity and physical education (PE):

1. Time will be devoted in the elementary schedule for supervised and safe recess.
2. Physical activity shall not be used as a form of punishment or consequence.
3. Elementary students will be given Movement Breaks every 90 minutes of seat time.
4. PE will be recognized as an integral part of the core curriculum, K-12.
5. The PE program will devote at least 50% of class time to moderate to vigorous activity.

Note: 50 schools completed the SHI in 2017-18, and 19 completed the SHI between October 2018 and March 2019.

Figure 1. School Health Index Responses to Questions about Physical Activity

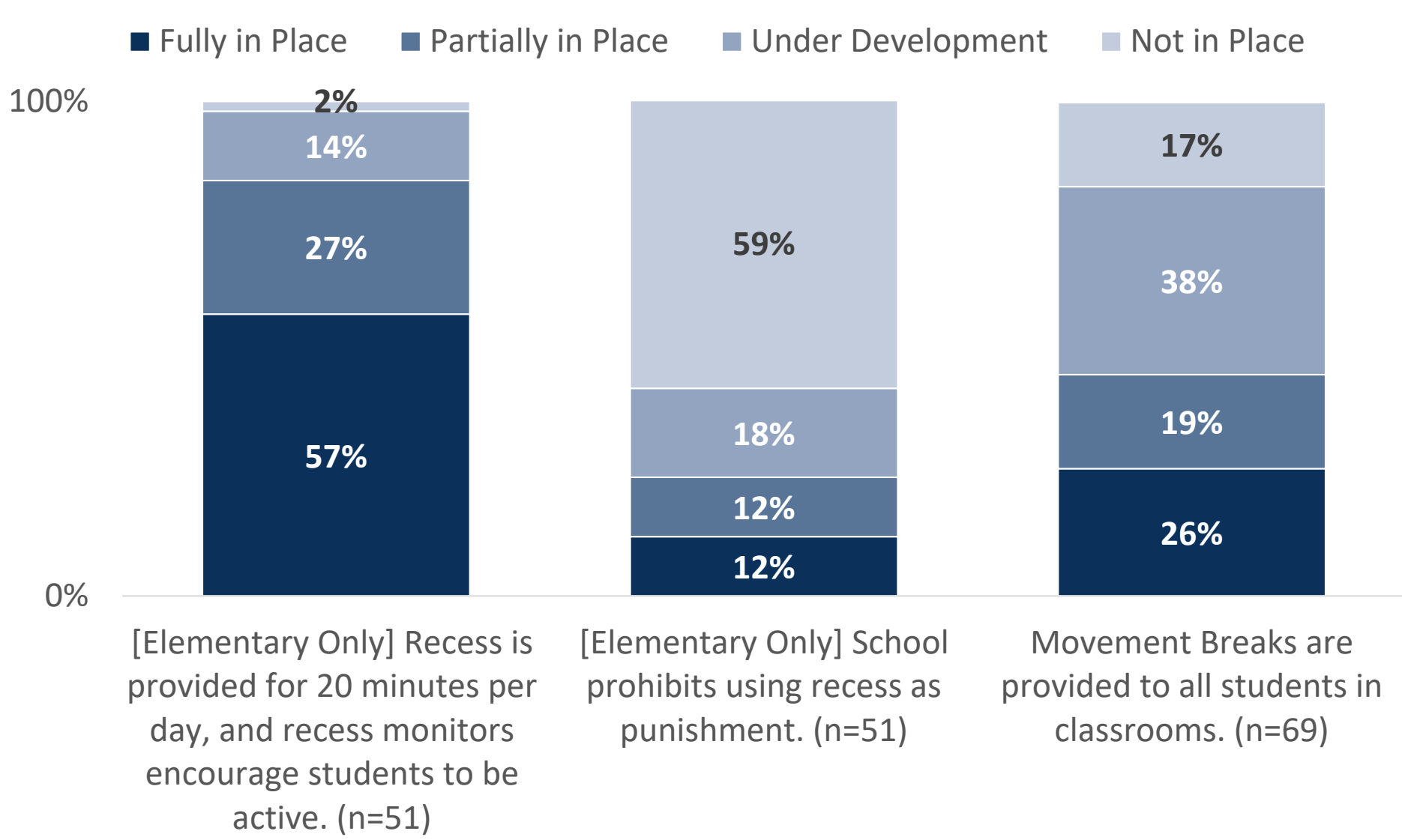
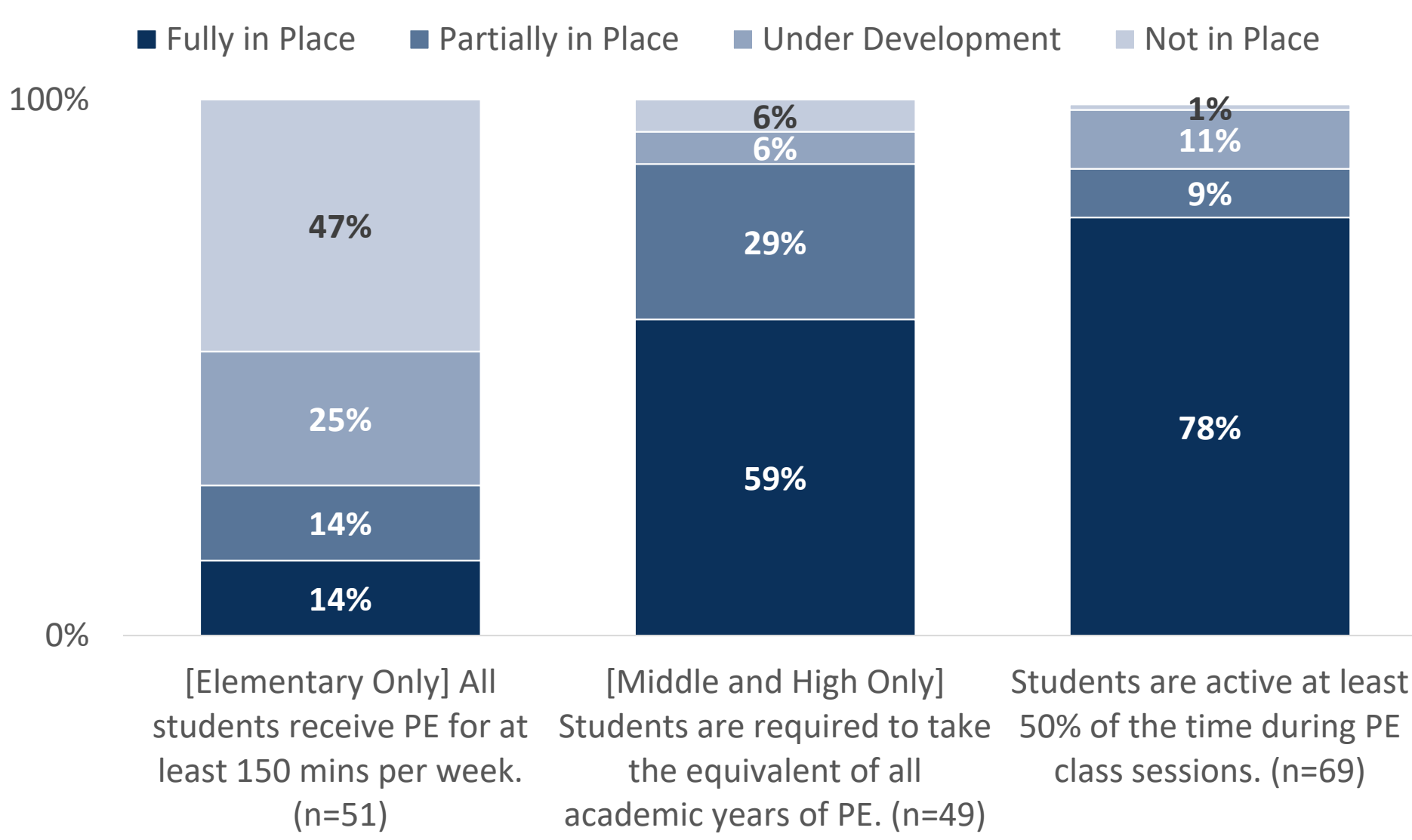


Figure 2. School Health Index Responses to Questions about Physical Education



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