

# How sport and physical activity **helps your kids learn better**



Our whole  
community **wins**

**Activities such as running, swimming, kicking a footy or playing netball can all help your kids do better at school.**

We know this because a lot of researchers in Australia and around the world have been investigating the links between sport, physical activity and academic achievement. Here at the Department of Sport and Recreation, we've done our homework checked it twice and know their findings add up: being active in the playground and on the playing field helps kids perform better in the classroom.

The majority of research points to more physically active children being smarter, because exercise has biological, psychological and social benefits.



“The evidence indicates that regular physical activity is likely to provide children with the optimum physiological condition for maximising learning.”

**Dr Karen Martin**  
Research Fellow, School of  
Population Health, UWA

“In my experience as an educator, there is no question that kids who are physically active are more open to learning.”

**Stephen Breen**  
President, Western Australian  
Primary Principals' Association



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**biggerpicture.dsr.wa.gov.au**

## Some of the main research findings are:

- ✓ There's a positive link between physical activity and academic achievement.
- ✓ Active boys and girls are more likely to pass exams.
- ✓ Physical activity leads to improvements in maths and reading.
- ✓ Physical activity is likely to provide children with the optimum physiological condition for maximising learning.

## On top of that, the research also finds that:

- ✓ Physical activity improves memory, behaviour, concentration and reasoning ability.
- ✓ Children reckon exercise is fun and they welcome the chance to do it at school.
- ✓ Kids who exercise improve their motor skills and their on-task behaviour in lessons.
- ✓ Particularly with girls, the more vigorous the physical activity the more success they will achieve academically.
- ✓ Inactivity is bad for children.

**Physical activity**  
**enhances**  
**cognitive function**  
improving memory,  
behaviour,  
concentration  
and academic  
achievement.



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### This document is an updated version of:

Martin KE, 2010 Brain Boost Sport and Physical Activity Enhance Children's Learning, The University of Western Australia, Department of Sport and Recreation

# How does exercise or being active do this?

- Exercise increases blood flow to the cortex of the brain which is associated with memory and problem solving.
- It can stimulate nerve growth and development in the brain.
- It can increase the brain's resistance to injury.



In other words, if you help your children get regular exercise, their brains will be fitter and will work better at school. And when our kids are fitter and do better at school, our whole community wins.



You can find out more about the latest research by reading our publication **Brain Boost: how sport and physical activity enhance children's learning.**