



Collaboration a Key to Happy, Safe & Active Children

"We have learned how to provide inclusive and active play for the children we serve."

Cori Brown
Program Director
Boys and Girls Club of Perham



Anyone who's seen kids on a playground knows that most are naturally physically active and love to move around. However, as kids (and adults) get older, it can be a challenge to keep them (and us) moving for the recommended amount of sixty minutes each day!

When kids find an activity that's fun, they'll do it a lot, get better at it, feel accomplished, and want to do it even more. But how does this happen with one child, let alone several hundreds of children? In order to help kids move more, the Boys & Girls Club of the Perham Area partnered with *PartnerSHIP 4 Health*, the health improvement arm of public health in Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin counties.

PartnerSHIP 4 Health has teamed up with North Dakota State University and Concordia College physical education professors Jenny Linker and Kristen Hetland, who have combined their expertise and teaching experiences to create a consulting service called *SchoolsAlive!* Linker and Hetland train staff to support active and inclusive play, which keeps children safe, happy and healthy and brings out the best in every child. High energy engaging workshops are offered on-site to schools and organizations serving children to support active, fun, and healthy living.

"Participating in the workshop provided us with a lot of 'ah-ha' moments" says Cori Brown, Program Director of the Boys and Girls Club of the Perham Area. "The active recess training was superior and we loved the hands-on and individual approach that Jenny and Kristen provided to our staff. We learned improved techniques for large motor games and outdoor play activities, such as moving away from elimination games and those that included humans as targets (i.e. dodge ball); these techniques will keep kids safe and active," added Brown.

The Boys & Girls Club also learned new strategies regarding dividing children into teams as well as the importance of incorporating frequent physical activity energizers throughout the day. Staff now offer an activity break called "interlude dance" after lunch and before movies.

"I am glad that Linker and Hetland recommended that our high school program leaders attend the training; it was valuable information for them to have and internalize. Including them also was an effective way to communicate why we are doing what we do, differently," states Brown.

In addition to the instruction received from Linker and Hetland, the staff has gained additional ideas related to the promotion of inclusive and active play from a resource called *Playworks Playbook*.

According to Brown, the intentional collaboration between *PartnerSHIP 4 Health*, the Boys & Girls Club of the Perham Area, and the *SchoolsAlive!* Consultants has in turn impacted the behavior of the club members, "Our club members have responded positively to the changes. I see more engagement and fewer behavior issues now that they are included during all movement activities. Subtle changes have had great impact and we appreciate the support of the *SchoolsAlive!* Consultants."

Healthy, physically active kids also are more likely to be academically motivated, alert, and successful. And physical competence builds self-esteem at every age.

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