Health and Community Centered Schools

Sara Zimmerman, JD
What is the connection between health and school location?
1/3 of CHILDREN are overweight or obese
Health effects of obesity

- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Asthma
- Heart disease
- Low self-esteem
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Depression
Insufficient physical activity
Kids aren’t getting the exercise they used to on the way to school

Rates of walking and bicycling:

1969: 50% of students
2009: 12% of students
What’s the biggest reason children don’t walk or bicycle to school?

Distance

Percent of children living less than one mile from school:

1969: 45 percent
2001: 25 percent

Kids who walk or bicycle to school get more physical activity, have a lower risk of obesity & diabetes, and improve overall health.

Active Living Research. Walking and Biking to School, Physical Activity and Health Outcomes. May 2009.
More kids are physically active after school when they have access to a schoolyard.

What Is a Joint Use Agreement?
A Fact Sheet for Parents, Students, and Community Members

Many communities lack safe, adequate places for children and their families to exercise and play. Schools might have a variety of recreational facilities—gyms, playgrounds, fields, courts, tracks—but many districts close their property to the public after school hours because of concerns about costs, vandalism, security, maintenance, and liability in the event of injury.

Most states currently have laws that encourage or even require schools to open their facilities to the community for recreation or other civic uses. Nonetheless, school officials may be reluctant to do so, cautious about the expense in times of increasingly tight budgets.

The good news is that city, county, and town governments can partner with school districts through what are known as joint use agreements to address these concerns.

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JOINT USE AGREEMENT 1:
Opening Outdoor School Facilities for Use During Non-School Hours

JOINT USE AGREEMENT 2:
Opening Indoor and Outdoor School Facilities for Use During Non-School Hours

JOINT USE AGREEMENT 3:
Opening School Facilities for Use During Non-School Hours and Authorizing Third Parties to Operate Programs

JOINT USE AGREEMENT 4:
Joint Use of District and City Recreation Facilities

Developed by the National Policy & Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity (NPLAN)

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Checklists

Checklist for Developing a Joint Use Agreement (JUA)

Many communities lack safe, adequate places for children and their families to exercise and play. Schools might have a variety of recreational facilities - gymnasiums, playgrounds, fields, courts, tracks - but many districts close their property to the public after school hours because of concerns about costs, vandalism, security, maintenance, and liability in the event of injury.

Most states currently have laws that encourage or even require schools to open their facilities to the community for recreation or other civic uses. Nonetheless, school officials may be reluctant to do so, cautious about the expense in times of increasingly tight budgets. The good news is that city, county, and town governments can partner with school districts through what are known as joint use agreements to address these concerns.

A joint use agreement (JUA) is a formal agreement between two separate government entities - often a school and a city or county - setting forth the terms and conditions for shared use of public property or facilities. JUAs can range in scope from relatively simple (e.g., opening school playgrounds to the public outside of school hours) to complex (allowing community individuals and groups to access all school recreation facilities, and allowing schools to access all city or county recreation facilities).

Just as there is no one model JUA, there is no single method to develop an agreement. Successful JUAs require a lot of thought, effort, and cooperation to reach agreement on a range of issues.

This checklist is designed to identify issues for the parties to consider when developing a JUA to share existing facilities. Not all of the issues presented will be applicable in all situations, and there may be issues unique to a community that are not addressed here.

The parties need to agree on operational and management issues.

- **Priority of Uses**
  - Rank the priority of types of users to allocate facility use accordingly

- **Scheduling**
  - Determine which entity will be responsible for scheduling use
  - Determine how to accommodate schedule changes/cancellations

- **Access and Security**
  - Determine security needs
  - Identify employees who will need access to properties and facilities
  - Develop security protocol

- **Materials and Equipment**
  - Allocate responsibility for providing equipment/materials
  - Determine the need for storage
  - If storage is needed, determine location, access, and security

- **Supervision**
  - Determine the type of supervision required
  - Identify which party will be responsible for providing supervision

- **Custodial Services**
  - Determine the type of custodial services/equipment needed
  - Allocate responsibility for providing custodial services/trash containers

- **Toilet Facilities**
  - Determine access to existing facilities
  - Determine need for portable/temporary facilities
  - Allocate responsibility for providing and servicing portable toilets

- **Parking**
  - Determine access to parking facilities

- **Maintenance**
  - Allocate responsibility for regular property maintenance
  - Determine whether additional maintenance is needed, and which party will provide service

- **Inspection and Notification of Damage**
  - Determine the manner/frequency of property inspection
  - Determine protocol for notifying identified employees of damage,
    - including whom to contact, by what means, and deadlines for contacting and responding
Goal: Make It Easy for Schools and Communities to Make It Easy for Kids to Be Healthy
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Working Towards Walkable and Diverse Schools
Healthy kids
Integrated schools
What’s the problem?

Tension between walkability and diversity
Why?
Racially segregated neighborhoods

Map by Bill Rankin, http://www.radicalcartography.net/index.html?chicagodots
Percentage of black residents

Percentage of white residents

http://www.umich.edu/~lawrace/citymaps.htm/charlotte.htm
Segregated Children

- In neighborhoods
- In schools: segregation has increased since the late 1980s

Why Do Diverse Schools Matter?

Decrease feelings of racial superiority

Yield adults who live and work in integrated settings

Improve academic performance
What to do?

- Short term strategies
- Long term strategies
1. Address residential segregation

- Joint planning between schools and cities
- Incentives for mixed income housing
- Inclusionary zoning
2. Include walkability and diversity in making decisions about school location

- Formally include criteria in school siting/closure policies
- Locate schools on neighborhood borders
- Focus on smaller schools
- Consider multistory schools in central locations
3. Design student assignment policies to maximize walkability and diversity

- Preferably, use neighborhood assignment policies
- Draw attendance boundaries to maximize diversity while balancing proximity
- Design school choice/magnet programs to encourage diversity
4. Support walkability and bikability
Bottom Line

Walkability and diversity are both crucial for kids’ health and success

Balance these key interests
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