

STEP

EXPRESS

STEP Express is a comprehensive program, created by SelectHealth. It is designed to encourage 4th graders to work toward a healthier lifestyle through classroom lesson plans, physical activity, and a fitness challenge.

PARENT HANDOUT

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REVERSING THE TREND

Obesity in children is on the rise. According to the Utah Department of Health, more than 20 percent of elementary-age children are “at an unhealthy weight.”¹



Much of our time as families is spent doing sedentary activities, including watching television, playing video games, and using the computer. These prevent children from being physically active.

HEALTHY KIDS MAKE BETTER STUDENTS

Researchers have found a strong relationship between physical fitness and academic achievement. Children who are active are more likely to have improved concentration, be more attentive, and earn higher grades. Furthermore, participation in organized sports encourages confidence, teamwork, and leadership.²

For these reasons, SelectHealth is committed to helping families be more active and healthy. We are partnering with your child’s school to promote and provide opportunities for physical activity.

It is recommended that children participate in at least 60 to 90 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity most days of the week, preferably daily.³

References:

1. Utah Department of Health. [Childhood Overweight in Utah, 2008](http://health.utah.gov/obesity/docs/2008Ht_Wt_4_page.pdf). 2008. 28 Jul. 2009 <http://health.utah.gov/obesity/docs/2008Ht_Wt_4_page.pdf>.
2. Mahar, Matthew T; et al. [Effects of a classroom-based program on physical activity and on-task behavior](http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/551022). Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise. Utah Department of Health, 2007, Accessed 6 Aug 2008. <<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/551022>>.
3. Corbin, Charles B. and Robert Pangrazi. [Guidelines for Appropriate Physical Activity for Elementary School Children 2003 Update](http://www.aahperd.org/nasde/pdf-files/inpud_activity.pdf). The National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2003, Accessed 6 Aug 2008. <http://www.aahperd.org/nasde/pdf-files/inpud_activity.pdf>.

INTRODUCING STEP EXPRESS

For the next eight weeks, your child will be involved in a wellness program created by SelectHealth.

This program, called STEP Express, was developed specifically for 4th grade students and designed to reward them based on participation. It encourages your student to be active and healthy through classroom lessons, including education in nutrition, physical activity, and even social studies and math.

The following is a summary of STEP Express:

1. At the beginning of the program, a fitness assessment will be conducted to determine where your child is physically. The activities have been planned so that any child can participate regardless of skill level or coordination. If your child is unable to participate at school on the day of the evaluation, you will be provided with instructions for performing the evaluation at home.
2. Each school will have a map showing the world. The students will be encouraged to walk enough miles, as a school, to reach Beijing, China from Utah.
3. A tracking passport will be provided so your child can record how many minutes of activity he or she performs daily. You will convert the minutes to miles following the instructions in your child's passport. This will need to be initialed weekly by you as the parent or guardian.
4. Each child will receive a prizes for participating in this program.
5. At the end of this challenge, there will be another fitness assessment to measure improvement.
6. Grand prizes will be rewarded to winning schools. First, second, third place cash prizes are given for health and fitness initiatives at these schools.



If you have any questions about STEP Express, please contact your child's teacher or visit www.stepexpress.org and click on the "Parent" tab.



ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD

You can aid in the support and encouragement of your child's physical activity.

An active parent sets the example and is a powerful stimulus for children to get active. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "A sustained 10 percent weight loss will reduce an overweight person's lifetime medical costs by \$2,200 to \$5,300 by lowering costs associated with high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and high cholesterol."⁴

You will also be responsible for monitoring your child's progress by initialing his or her weekly minute tracker. There may be an opening and closing program assembly that you are welcome to attend. If you would like to be a classroom volunteer and participate in the program, please contact your child's teacher.



Reference:

4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Preventing Obesity and Chronic Diseases Through Good Nutrition and Physical Activity](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/) Aug. 2003. 28 Jul. 2009 <www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/>.

Below are a few suggestions to encourage your child to be active.

- > Plan ahead. Make physical activity a regular part of your family's daily or weekly schedule. Write it on a family activity calendar.
- > Limit the amount of time spent watching television and playing video/computer games daily. Less than two hours daily is recommended.
- > Put your kids in charge. Let each child take a turn choosing the activity for the day or for the week. It doesn't matter what you are doing as long as you are active.
- > Go for a 20 minute walk after dinner.
- > Walk the dog.
- > Go kite flying.
- > Wash the car by hand.
- > Garden or mow the lawn.
- > Play fun games such as tag or kickball.
- > Take a family bike ride.
- > Go on a short hike.
- > Turn up the music and dance.
- > Roller skate or in-line skate.
- > Jump rope.
- > Go bowling.
- > Play Frisbee® or catch.
- > Train together for a 5K walk/run.
- > Shoot basketball hoop.
- > Select activities that require no new skills such as walking, climbing the stairs, or jogging.

www.stepexpress.org