



## Belmont-Cragin Elementary School

**Belmont-Cragin Elementary School has made considerable strides in improving the health and wellness of their students by using an evidence-based physical education curriculum.**

### Belmont-Cragin Elementary School

Level: PK-8 grade

Enrollment: 629

Low Income: 92%

- 4% White
- 0.3% Asian
- 1% Black
- 94% Hispanic

(ISBE School Report Card)

### Improved Health and Academics

Belmont-Cragin Elementary School in Chicago believes in the academic benefits of increasing physical activity throughout the school day. By adopting SPARK, an evidence-based P.E. curriculum that engages students in more moderate to vigorous physical activity than their previous P.E. curriculum, they hope to see academic benefits. P.E. teacher Dennis Peters led this initiative with consistent support from school administrators and Chicago Public Schools (CPS).

### CPS Helps Build Capacity

Peters attributes much of the trend towards health, wellness, and enhanced physical education in his school to the strong leadership from the CPS Office of Student Health and Wellness. This office works to increase the quality of health services and wellness environments through collaboration, and has been assisting schools in enhance P.E. throughout Chicago, focusing first on providing professional development for PE teachers.

Since September of 2012, the Office of Student Health and Wellness, in collaboration with the district’s Physical Education Leadership Team (PELT) has hosted six professional development training opportunities designed to familiarize teachers with enhanced P.E. Peters is optimistic about the focus CPS has taken to enhance physical education, but knows many schools will face difficulties in light of CPS budget constraints.

While resources may be tight, Belmont-Cragin is a school that has sought opportunities for collaboration and improvement and is seeing the results.

### DESKercises

Budgetary constraints have not deterred Peters from making changes in his school. When he started working for Belmont-Cragin Elementary School last year, Peters was greeted with enthusiasm because Principal Stacy Stewart recognized the benefits of improving the P.E. curriculum and getting students active throughout the school day.

Peters recognized that physical education needed to consist of a higher proportion of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) for every student and that students would benefit from additional physical activity during the school day. It was then that the school partnered with the Walmart Foundation’s Wellness Academics & You (WAY) program to introduce DESKercises, which includes fun games related to the core curriculum that encourage physical activity in the classroom.

Belmont-Cragin also participated in the Go for the Gold Campaign, a partnership between the Healthy Schools Campaign and CPS to help schools meet the rigorous criteria of the USDA’s HealthierUS School Challenge. In response to Michelle Obama’s call for an end to childhood obesity, the whole school made a commitment to healthy snacks.

**“The P.E. department’s initiative of providing in-class exercise was a great way to prepare students for the ISAT test. Daily exercise and hydration provided students with the tools they needed to be successful.”**

**Principal Stacy Stewart**

**Belmont-Cragin Elementary School**

## Resources

### WAY Program

[www.i4learning.com/](http://www.i4learning.com/)

### SPARK

[www.sparkpe.org/](http://www.sparkpe.org/)

### Go For the Gold

[www.healthyschoolscampaign.org/programs/go-for-the-gold/](http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org/programs/go-for-the-gold/)

### Enhance P.E. Task Force

[www.isbe.net/EPE/html/EPETF.htm](http://www.isbe.net/EPE/html/EPETF.htm)

### The Community Guide

[www.thecommunityguide.org/](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/)



## 30+ 20+ 10 and Field Trips!

The health and wellness efforts at Belmont-Cragin were also driven by the introduction of CPS's 30+20+10 program. In order to implement the required 30 minutes of daily P.E. for every student, Principal Stewart hired Peters full time as a physical education teacher. In addition to daily P.E., schools following the 30+20+10 model engage students in 20 minutes of meaningful recess each day, as well as 10 minutes of physical activity in the classroom.

Peters wants his students to be excited about physical activity, which is why he finds creative ways to get them moving. "We'll take the 5th through 8th grade students to the Bulls-Sox Training Academy at the end of September. They will come back drenched in sweat, and beaming because they are having so much fun being active," says Peters. Additionally, he will take his students to Northeastern Illinois University's Adventure Challenge Education camp where they will use high and low rope courses to encourage team building and problem solving while being physically active.

## Academic Benefits

"The P.E. department's initiative of providing in-class exercise was a great way to prepare students for the ISAT test. Daily exercise and hydration provided students with the tools they needed to be successful," says Principal Stewart.

Peters noticed that during the months before the big test, efforts were made to hold after school tutoring sessions to raise test scores. That is when he approached

Principal Stewart with the neuroscience research showing that students who engage in physical activity prior to taking a standardized test perform better. "We had our students walking at least 20 minutes before they took their ISAT test," says Peters. Principal Stewart and Peters believe that their continued emphasis on the importance of physical activity will benefit their students academically.

## The Path to Change

"With old P.E., students would line up and stand for five minutes as the teacher took attendance, now my students enter the gym running or immediately begin group exercise and as I pass them, they tell me their name. This is how I take attendance."

Peters uses small-sided games with as many as six courts in the space of one gym with two or three students engaging in an activity in an effort to keep his students as physically active as possible. His students engage in MVPA almost 40% of their class time, but Peters is aiming to make that 50% this year by encouraging students who are less inclined to participate. "I encourage my students by showing them their improvements. I make a big deal out of the strides that they make in their health and wellness, and even showcase their achievements to the administration," says Peters.

For more information, contact Dennis Peters  
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[www.iphionline.org](http://www.iphionline.org)