

Community Use of School Property in Missouri



# Success Stories





# Success Stories

Community Use of School Property in Missouri is available at [kchealthykids.org](http://kchealthykids.org)

- A Guide to Implementation
- Success Stories
- A Checklist
- Best Practices for Scheduling
- Paying for Community Use of School Property

This guide was created through a partnership between KC Healthy Kids, Missouri Association of Councils of Government, Missouri Consultants for Education, Missouri School Boards' Association, Missouri State Alliance of YMCAs and Public Health Law Center.

The organizations were convened to promote and sustain community changes that enable healthy lifestyles. Their goal is to accelerate and advance policy and environmental changes in Missouri that encourage healthy eating and active living.

## About KC Healthy Kids

KC Healthy Kids rallies the people in our communities to improve access to affordable fresh food and safe places to walk and play. When our neighborhoods support healthy habits, we are less likely to suffer from obesity, which is linked to Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and poor mental health. To make a lasting impact, we shape policies that improve our food system and physical surroundings, and, ultimately, the places where we live, work, learn and play.

## About the Public Health Law Center

The Public Health Law Center helps create communities where everyone can be healthy. We empower our partners to transform their environments by eliminating commercial tobacco, promoting healthy food, and encouraging active lifestyles. We believe that our legal knowledge can help bring justice to public health as we support our partners in reducing health disparities. Founded in 2000, the Center is located at Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota.



# Success Stories

---

Physical activity is essential for improving the overall health and fitness of individuals and communities. Participating in regular physical activity can prevent obesity and help reduce the risk of many adverse health outcomes such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and depression.<sup>1</sup>

To maintain active and healthy lifestyles, children and adults must have access to safe, affordable and convenient places to engage in adequate physical activity.

However, many communities have limited access to recreational facilities that are affordable and convenient. In such cases, schools can provide a valuable resource for facilitating physical activity by opening school district facilities for community use.

School districts across the country have adopted community use policies as an effective strategy to encourage

physical activity in the community. School districts in Missouri commonly use a version of the model policies published by the Missouri School Board Association and Missouri Consultants for Education to draft their community use policies.

By adopting these policies, school districts allow the local community to use the district's indoor and outdoor spaces, including stadiums, athletic fields, gymnasiums, playgrounds, cafeterias, kitchens and classrooms, for physical or recreational activities during and outside of normal school hours (i.e. before and after school, on weekends and during summer and other school holidays).

This resource highlights five stories that demonstrate some of the successes that communities in Missouri have experienced by making school district facilities available for use by local communities.

# Supporting Physical Activity for Children and Youth

The Pierce City R-VI School District in Lawrence County is currently the only community space with proper facilities for many sports. Since the school district does not offer organized sports until high school, allowing community members to use the district's facilities at no charge provides a valuable opportunity for children to participate in sport activities prior to high school.



The school district allows community members to use the district's sports field, playground and gymnasium before and after school hours on weekdays, during weekends and on school holidays.

They use a structured and supervised system for implementing the community use program and maintain informal agreements with ongoing users such as youth groups playing volleyball, basketball, baseball, softball and football.

The school district benefits from its community use program because it creates positive community interaction by supporting physical activity for children and youth.



# Keeping Kids Involved in Healthy Activities During Summer Break

The Grandview C-4 School District has an ongoing partnership with the local Windsteppers Track and Field Team. This community use partnership allows the team to use the district's athletic stadium, when not in use by the school, for track practices and meets throughout the spring, summer, and fall. It may serve approximately 20-90 students in any given season.

The collaboration has provided a valuable opportunity for children and youth to learn about the healthy aspects of track and field participation at a young age.

It has also served as an effective strategy for keeping kids involved in healthy activities during the summer and has contributed to the successes of Grandview girls and boys teams participating in the state track meet.

Additionally, the school district's playgrounds, gymnasiums and auditoriums are frequently used by other sports teams and community groups. The district's written documents on community use can be found on the school district's website, at the following link: [http://www.grandviewc4.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=422567&type=d&pREC\\_ID=922447](http://www.grandviewc4.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=422567&type=d&pREC_ID=922447)



# Play and Positive Community Interactions for People of All Abilities

The Adair County Family YMCA has ongoing community use agreements with the local school district. For example, the YMCA uses the Ray Miller School for their after school program, from dismissal to 6:00 p.m. on all days in which the Kirksville School District is in session.<sup>2</sup> The school district's outdoor facilities are open to the public as long as school is not in session and/or are not being used by a school group. The district uses an approval process for requests to use the track and field.

Additionally, the Kirksville R-III school district now owns an inclusive playground that is designed to allow people of all abilities to play together. Before this playground was built, the closest inclusive playground was located in St Louis, more than 150 miles away from Kirksville.<sup>3</sup>

While all maintenance and insurance will be provided by the YMCA, the playground will be considered part of the Kirksville R-III campus and the National Park system.<sup>4</sup>

Providing free public access to this playground will increase opportunity for children and adults of all abilities to participate in physical activity in

a safe environment and help foster positive community interactions. More information about the inclusive playground and its impact on the community can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6OiNO-OCtQ&feature=youtu.be>



# Allowing a Wide Variety of Groups to Use Facilities Free of Charge

The Milan C-2 School District in Sullivan County has the only full-size gymnasium in the community. Therefore, the district allows a wide variety of groups to use the district's facilities at no charge.



For example, in the fall of 2015, Sullivan County used the high school gymnasium to hold its Youth Wrestling Tournament and also used the school cafeteria and kitchen.

In 2015, the Milan C-2 school district permitted a local individual to use the school gymnasium for a craft fair. While the gymnasium was provided free of charge for this event, the district found a creative way to offset part of the program cost by channeling the individual's donation to the school to cover the cost of custodial fees.

The school district's parking lot was also permitted to be used for the Rotary Club Circus, providing a convenient space for community activity.

# Fostering Long-term Relationships Throughout the Community

The Brentwood School District has formal agreements and a structured application process in place to facilitate community use of school facilities. By allowing the rental of indoor and outdoor facilities, the district has been able to establish and foster long-term relationships with businesses, organizations and individuals throughout the community.



The Mid-County YMCA uses district property to host after-school enrichment programs for elementary students and the Brentwood Parks and Recreation Department uses one of the gymnasiums for a basketball camp.

The Chamber of Commerce monthly lunch programs take place in the district's conference center. Scouting and school-related groups, such as parent teacher organizations, are frequent users of district facilities. In the summer and fall, the elementary school fields are used more frequently for practice.

The district's written documents on community use procedures, regulations, and related forms are available on the district's website, at [https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SB\\_ePolicy/SB\\_PolicyOverview.aspx?S=437&Sch=437](https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SB_ePolicy/SB_PolicyOverview.aspx?S=437&Sch=437)



# Conclusion

These success stories well-illustrate how school districts, community partners and community members across Missouri are working together to make school property a shared asset for the common good. Community use programs not only increase opportunity for community members to stay active by increasing access to safe, affordable and convenient facilities for physical activity but also provide an opportunity for maximizing the use of school district facilities and fostering community support for schools as they become a hub of activity in the local community.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (2008), <https://health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/paguide.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> ADAIR COUNTY YMCA, Child Care, <http://www.adairymca.org/child-care.html>

<sup>3</sup> Danielle Brown, Dream of Building Inclusive Playground in Kirksville Now a Reality (Aug. 2016), KIRKSVILLE DAILY EXPRESS <http://www.kirksvilledailyexpress.com/news/20160812/dream-of-building-inclusive-playground-in-kirksville-now-reality>

<sup>4</sup> NEMO PLAYGROUND, School Awarded Grant for Playground (April 2015), <http://www.nemoplayground.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/School-Awarded-Grant-for-Playground.odt>