

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## Physical activity at school

**Dr Chris Lonsdale, from the School of Science and Health, is leading a team of researchers who will investigate the engagement of students in physical activity at school. This research is being supported by an Australian Research Council Discovery Project grant.**

'There is ample evidence that participating in physical activity can lead to a variety of benefits for children and adolescents', says Dr Lonsdale. 'Compared with their inactive counterparts, youth who are sufficiently active report more positive self-concept, experience a better quality of life, achieve higher academic results and enjoy better physical health. Unfortunately the physical activity levels of many children and adolescents in Australia and other developed nations are currently insufficient to promote these many benefits. A recent survey has shown that physical activity levels in NSW are particularly low in youth from low socio-economic status and immigrant backgrounds. This study will test the effect of a professional development program targeting physical education teachers that is designed to increase students' opportunities and motivation to be physically active at school and outside of school hours. The program will include innovative online collaboration and learning mechanisms to ensure the teachers gain a broader experience by interaction with peers.

This study will take place in public secondary schools in the Western Sydney region, an area with a large proportion of youth who come from low socio-economic status and immigrant backgrounds, and one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. The focus is on refining, implementing and evaluating an intervention that could be used in future studies that aim to promote physical activity in areas external to the educational precinct.



This project has the potential to bring both social and health benefits to current and future Australians. The results will provide insights into the mechanisms responsible for physical activity behaviour change in schools, particularly those with communities at risk of low activity, thereby reducing the risk of obesity and promoting social and emotional well-being among these Australians.

**Project Title:** A Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial of a School-based Physical Activity Intervention in At-risk Communities

**Funding has been set at:** \$484,000

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