

TransformUs

A research impact case study

Getting kids moving

On a typical school day, Australian children spend about 64% of their waking hours sitting.

Only 9% of boys and 8% of girls meet the recommended physical activity and sedentary guidelines each day.



Prolonged sitting and sedentary behaviour puts children at risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. These conditions are the leading cause of illness, disability and death in Australia.

But we also know that regular physical activity can boost fitness, heart and bone health, and mental health. It can also improve cognitive development and lead to better academic results.

A **school intervention** is both practical and necessary, given low physical activity levels in childhood have been shown to track well into adulthood if unaddressed.

This notion is supported by the World Health Organization, which has recommended a [“whole-of-school” approach](#) to physical activity.

What is TransformUs?

TransformUs is designed to re-frame the way children learn, incorporating opportunities to **move more** and **sit less** inside and outside the classroom. It takes advantage of opportunities to incorporate movement and reduce sitting throughout the day, using innovative behavioural, educational, and environmental strategies within classroom, school and home settings.

Movement is integrated into everyday class lessons - so the delivery of the lesson changes, not the content. **TransformUs** is delivered by primary classroom teachers and it does not focus on sport or physical education. Full lesson plans and supporting resources are made available after registration.

TransformUs has been carefully developed by IPAN researchers to align with both the Australian Government’s [24 hour movement guidelines](#) and the Australian school curriculum.

“TransformUs is about recognising how we can do the things we already plan to do, in a slightly different way, so we get the benefits of physical activity and increase students’ engagement in learning as well as their wellbeing.”

- TransformUs principal

“TransformUs has allowed me to see that movement is an ally in learning, not an enemy.”

- TransformUs teacher



What did we find?

In a randomised controlled trial, compared to traditional schooling, students at schools participating in **TransformUs**:

- Spent up to **63 minutes less time sitting** on school days.
- Spent **5 minutes a day more in moderate to vigorous activity**
- Had higher vitamin D levels.
- Reduced **Body Mass Index (BMI), waist circumference and blood pressure.**
- **Increased attentiveness** in class – with 85% per cent of teachers reporting that their students had improved concentration in class after an active break.

TransformUs was also acceptable for teachers to implement, with teachers reporting **better classroom management** and **improved ‘on-task’ behaviour** during lessons - with 92% of teachers indicating that they would continue with active breaks in the classroom.

What impact has TransformUs had?

As a result of the successful trial, **TransformUs** has been made available to primary schools across Victoria. To date, more than 450 schools have adopted the program, with 1400 teachers involved. This number is continuing to grow.

TransformUs has been integrated into Victorian policy with the program recommended in the 2021 Active Schools Framework. It is also showcased in the 2019 consensus statement for obesity prevention, *A Healthier Start for Victorians*, released by VicHealth’s Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) roundtable.

The number of government and non-government organisations supporting the implementation of **TransformUs** has grown from six to 16 partners* over a 3-year period.

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**TransformUs is delivered in partnership with the Victorian Department of Education and Training, VicHealth, Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation Victoria, Victorian Principals Association, Independent Schools Victoria, Peak Phys Ed.*

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