

Dear Educator,

As a physical education teacher, you are in an influential position to help direct students toward healthy and fit lifestyles. Since students spend more time at school than any place else, it is the natural environment for them to develop physical activity skills, increase their knowledge of various activities and build the self-confidence that is helpful in leading a healthy life.

The average amount of time per week that American children ages two to 17 spend watching television is an astounding 19 hours and 40 minutes.¹ The impact of this and other habits is frighteningly evident. The percentage of overweight children ages six to 15 has tripled since 1980 (or in the past 23 years).² Physical activity can help displace this unhealthy trend.

The benefits of physical activity are numerous and vital, as you already know — in the long-term it can reduce the risk of dying from heart disease; and reduces the risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure and colon cancer. More immediately, regular physical activity helps control weight and build healthy bones, muscles and joints; and may reduce feelings of depression and anxiety while promoting psychological well-being. Recent research has also shown a possible correlation between higher levels of fitness and higher academic achievement in reading and math.³

To assist in your efforts to encourage daily participation in physical activity among your students, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) created the VERB™ campaign. In support of this initiative and your commitment to promoting active lifestyles for your students, the CDC and Weekly Reader created this free educational program, **VERB. Ponte las pilas. Sal y Juega.** The VERB campaign is not a grammar lesson — you'll find nothing about nouns or adjectives in here! Rather, it is a tool for helping you convey the excitement, variety and fun of physical activity.

Pre-teen years are often the time when youth decide what hobbies and activities they will carry through to high school, and perhaps for a lifetime. The VERB campaign is intended for tweens, youth ages nine to 13, to help them find activities that encourage healthy behaviors.

We hope that this guide — complemented with an inventive contest, informative student magazines, lively video and poster — will help to motivate your students toward a healthy, active lifestyle. Please feel free to share these materials with your colleagues. Although they are copyrighted, they may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Sincerely,



Katy Dobbs
Editorial Director
Lifetime Learning Systems®, Inc.
A Division of Weekly Reader



¹ Nielsen, 2000.

² "Prevalence of Overweight Among Children and Adolescents: United States, 1999-2000." National Center for Health Statistics.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/overwght99.htm>

³ "State Study Proves Physically Fit Kids Perform Better Academically." California Department of Education. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/news/releases2002/rel137.asp>



Target Audience

Students in grades 4 through 8

Program Objectives

- Motivate Hispanic/Latino tweens (ages 9–13) in grades 4 through 8 to believe daily physical activity is valuable, possible and fun
- Encourage tweens to participate in physical activity at least 60 minutes per day, every day
- Heighten awareness among tweens of options and opportunities for their participation in physical activity

Teacher Objectives

- Support and encourage tween participation in physical activity at least 60 minutes per day, every day
- Communicate to tweens the options and opportunities available for them to participate in physical activity
- Coordinate the **VERB. Ponte las pilas. A new year to go out and play. Contest** to help motivate tweens to be active every day for two weeks

Standards Link

This program meets the following National Physical Education Standards according to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education:

- Understands proper warm-up and cool-down techniques and reasons for using them
- Understands the benefits and costs associated with participation in physical activity
- Understands how to monitor and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical fitness
- Understands the origins of different sports and how they have evolved
- Understands movement forms associated with highly skilled physical activities
- Understands physical activity as a vehicle for self-expression

Program Components

- This four-page teacher's guide, with activity ideas to incorporate into your physical education classes, and a reproducible contest entry form
- 30 four-page student magazines to share with your students to get them excited about popular activities and sports
- A wall poster to hang in the gymnasium or hallway
- A 5-minute video, *Go For It!*
- A teacher feedback form and reply card

To help us prepare future educational materials that best suit your needs, please complete and return the enclosed educator feedback form and reply card.

Every day, from the hours of 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., it's **VERB Time**. Although kids can be active anytime, anywhere, encourage them to participate in physical activity during these prime hours, when they could potentially be involved in unhealthy or risky behaviors. Do your best to help your students explore safe environments for participating in fun physical activities.

Getting Started

Prior to sharing the four-page magazines with your students, watch the **Go For It!** video with your class, and hang up the wall poster to build interest. When you are ready to hand out the magazines, tell your students they have the opportunity to participate in a fun contest where they can win prizes. Explain the rules of the contest and distribute photocopies of the Student Entry Form found in this packet. You may also wish to photocopy the official rules on the back page of this guide for your students. Then, pass out the student magazines, and encourage students to read the articles, which may give them ideas on how to participate in the contest.

To assist you with raising awareness of opportunities to engage in physical activity, contact your PTA coordinator. VERB and Weekly Reader sent materials to your school's PTA head, along with local community organizations in your area. These materials include ideas to get the entire school and community on the move. Encourage your students to participate in any and all of these VERB events.

Implementing the Contest

The **VERB. Ponte las pilas. A new year to go out and play. Contest** is designed to get tweens (youth ages 9-13) thinking about their new year's resolutions, and to encourage them to be physically active. Though the ultimate goal is to get kids to adopt physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle, we will give your class an incentive to engage in physical activity for two weeks time:

■ **Three (3) Grand Prize schools of winning student entries** will win 75 items of VERB Gear (T-shirts, VERB radios and other small equipment) and a year's subscription to Weekly Reader's *Current Health 1* magazine.* The three Grand Prize student entries will be posted on Weekly Reader's web site at www.weeklyreader.com/kids/current_health_1.

■ **Forty-seven (47) First Prize schools of runner up student entries** will win a year's subscription to *Current Health 1* magazine.*

Current Health 1 covers everything students need to know about nutrition, fitness, personal health, drugs and today's essential health issues. A year's subscription includes eight monthly color issues and Teacher's Guides that link each issue's content to state and National Health Education Standards.

How to enter the contest...

1. Photocopy and distribute the reproducible Student Entry Form included in this program to your students.
2. Ask students to participate in physical activity over the next two weeks and track their VERBs on the two-week calendar on the Student Entry Form. Also on the page, students should get creative and have fun imagining what it would be like if they were to star in their own VERB video or commercial.
3. Collect all Student Entry Form pages to submit together. Teachers must submit entries – students may not submit individually.
4. Complete the Official Contest Entry Form found on the back of this guide. (The form can be reproduced to keep the guide intact for future use.)
5. Submit the Official Contest Entry Form paper-clipped to all Student Entry Forms in one large envelope to:

VERB. Ponte las pilas. Contest
c/o Lifetime Learning Systems
200 First Stamford Place
P.O. Box 120023
Stamford, CT 06912-0023

Only one entry per teacher.

Deadline: Contest entries must be postmarked by **February 13, 2004**.

Judging will be based on creativity, originality and effort in participating in the contest (50%), and frequency of physical activity over the course of two weeks (50%). Each student entry will be judged separately. The three Grand Prizes will be awarded to the schools of the three winning student entries.

Winners will be notified on or about April 9, 2004.

*Subscription prizes (up to 30 student issues) will be fulfilled during the 2004-2005 school year.

Ideas to Shake Up

Here are some ideas to incorporate in your physical education classes to help students develop skills and broaden their exposure to physical activity in a fun, noncompetitive environment. These ideas can be adapted for use over multiple classes so that students are given sufficient time to learn skills and gain confidence in their abilities.

■ **Can You Juggle?** Practice the soccer skill of juggling by doing drills with your students in which they keep the ball in the air for as long as possible without hitting the floor or using their hands. Ask kids to work in pairs and first pass the ball to each other using only their heads (first show them proper technique). Then, tell them to use just their feet and then just their thighs. Combine two pairs of students and allow them to use any part of their body (excluding hands) to pass the ball to one another.

■ **Four Core of Soccer** Set up stations in the gym to practice four core soccer skills:

- passing (have kids pass the ball to each other, developing control and aim)
- dribbling (ask kids to move the ball down the length of the gym and back)
- trapping (get kids to kick the ball to one another, with the receiver trapping it with their feet, legs or chest)
- heading (have kids practice passing and stopping the ball with their heads)

Rotate groups of students to practice at all stations. In the next class, go over soccer game rules and break students into four groups to have scrimmages. This format can be adapted for volleyball and basketball skills as well.

■ **Time to Dance** When people think of physical activity and physical education class, dancing may not come to mind. Dance is a great cardiovascular exercise and helps tone muscles and increase flexibility. The only way kids will make physical activity part of their daily lifestyle is if they find something they really enjoy doing. Expose the girls *and boys* in your class to various kinds of dance. Set up stations or focus on one type of dance for each class. Invite volunteers who are professional dancers or teach dance classes to talk about the culture and basic steps of various dances.

■ **Put the Fun in Jogging** When offering students a variety of stations or activities to choose from, include jogging! Many Americans see the benefits of this endurance-building activity. On a nice day, take a jog with your students around the grounds. Better yet, start a jogging club after school and take a jog around the building or to the local park and back. You'll get in your physical activity for the day, and provide your students with a safe environment. Create a schedule with other interested teachers to keep the club going.



Your Class and Get Kids to *Ponte las pilas!*

■ **Hoops For Heart** Hoops For Heart is a fund-raising program co-sponsored by the American Heart Association and the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. As a physical education teacher, you can register with the American Heart Association, and you will receive materials to conduct a Hoops For Heart event — a coordinator's guide, complimentary basketball, skills and team game activity outline, and other promotional materials. Go to www.americanheart.org/hoops for more information.

■ **Warm Up, Cool Down** Talk to your students about these important aspects of being physically active. Make sure you put them into practice by allowing five-to-ten minutes before and after each class to warm up and cool down.

■ **VERB Wall** Make an A to Z VERB wall with all of your classes. Hang up a large piece of paper or poster board for each letter of the alphabet. Ask students to write, illustrate or attach pictures of verbs or activities (existing games and sports or ones invented by tweens) under the appropriate letters. Tweens can update this wall throughout the year as they try new activities or think of others they would like to add. This will also serve as a reminder to tweens of the many possibilities of VERBs to enjoy.

■ **Track It!** Ask students to log how many hours a day they are active and how many hours a day they are inactive. How does this tally up at the end of the week and the end of the month? Do they see any patterns or room for improvement? If so, what goals will they set for themselves? Encourage students to use the online VERB Recorder at www.VERBnow.com.

■ **Circle Workout** Organize students into groups, forming a circle. Place a ball in each circle and have tweens kick it to any person opposite to them. Alter the game by adding a second and then third ball.

■ **Stretching Your Limits** Explore with your class the benefits of performing proper stretches for flexibility and possible prevention of injury. Demonstrate how to work every muscle by holding each stretch for about 15 seconds, two times. Remind students never to bounce while stretching. Form a circle to perform head-to-toe stretches including arm circles, neck stretches, side bends and hip twists. Have groups of students form circles and ask one tween to make the first stretch, another to make the first stretch and then one of their own, a third student to make the first and second stretches and then one of their own, and so on. Also spend some time this week exploring various poses and breathing techniques of yoga. See www.VERBnow.com for other yoga ideas for this age range.

■ **Now That's an Obstacle** Create an obstacle course for students to complete by running and dribbling a ball. Use cones, chairs and other easy-to-acquire items. For the next class, increase the difficulty level by including more obstacles. Conduct this exercise for basketball, soccer, etc.

■ **Get in Gear** Invite a volunteer from a local community organization, police officer or fire fighter to talk about safety equipment and practices for riding bikes, skateboarding and inline skating.



Helpful Resources*

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance — www.aahperd.org

America's Athletes With Disabilities, Inc. — www.americasathletes.org

BAM! Body and Mind Teacher's Corner — www.bam.gov/teachers

CDC's VERB. It what you do. campaign page — www.cdc.gov/VERB

Disabled Sports USA — www.dsusa.org

The First Tee, an initiative of the World Golf Foundation — www.thefirsttee.org

Games Kids Play — www.gameskidsplay.net

International Inline Skating Association — www.iisa.org

International Mountain Bicycling Association — www.imba.com

Little League Baseball® — www.littleleague.org

Medical Network Inc.'s Health A to Z site — www.healthatoz.com

National Association of Professional Martial Artists — www.napma.com

The Official NFL Site for Kids — www.playfootball.com

PE Central — www.pecentral.com

P.E. 4 Life — www.pe4life.com

The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports — www.fitness.gov

United States Tennis Association — www.usta.com

USA Gymnastics Online — www.usa-gymnastics.org

USA Hockey InLine — www.usahockey.com/inline

USA Jump Rope — www.usajrf.org

USA Track & Field — www.usatf.org/youth

US Youth Soccer — www.usysa.org

VERB's site for kids — see what they're up to! The site also inventories activity cards with instructions for various games and physical activities. — www.VERBnow.com

Volleyball.Com — www.volleyball.com

* Disclaimer: These Web resources are provided solely as a service to you as an educator. These links do not constitute an endorsement of these organizations or their programs by CDC or the federal government, and none should be inferred. CDC is not responsible for the content of the individual organization Web pages found at these links.

