

Parents Can Help Shape Up Their Child's Physical Education

The number of schools offering daily physical education classes has declined sharply in the last decade. In fact, only one state — Illinois — requires physical education as a mandatory part of the school day, and studies have shown that only 47 percent of middle/junior high schools require physical education.¹

So if you're a parent of a child who needs a daily dose of physical education, how can you help make this happen during the school day?

"It's proven that healthy children are healthy learners, which means that parents should advocate for schools to make physical education a mandatory part of the school day," says Dr. Jayne Greenberg, an expert in physical education curriculum with the Miami public schools system and a former collegiate athlete. "What's more, for many children, P.E. class will be their only preparation for an active lifestyle."

Greenberg notes that physical education no longer is an ultra-competitive venue for the jocks to shine and lesser athletes to face the embarrassment of being picked last for the team. Progressive school districts across the country are embracing a new, cost-efficient form of physical education that emphasizes healthy life habits and overall levels of fitness.

Following are Greenberg's top tips for getting your local schools to consider physical education as a means of improving the student body's health:

- 1) Get involved. "Parents can accomplish so much on behalf of their kids by serving on committees and councils to choose a strong health curriculum," says Greenberg, adding that obtaining knowledge of how local schools budget for

- physical education will go a long way toward helping administrators coordinate programs.
- 2) Become an active fund-raiser. “Organizing fund-raisers is a tremendous help in providing educators with the tools they need to establish a New P.E. curriculum in local schools,” says Greenberg.
 - 3) Press for the New P.E. “The leading factor in getting children happily involved in physical education is by making it fun and by making it something that everyone — not just the athletes — can benefit from,” says Greenberg. To learn more about the New P.E. and to obtain a free kit on becoming an advocate for physical education in your local schools and community, visit www.PE4life.org and request a P.E. 4 Life community action kit.
 - 4) Emphasize physical activity at home. “Even if your child's school provides daily P.E. classes, parents should still make an effort to be active role models by enjoying 60 minutes of physical activity per day,” says Greenberg. “It's a fact that active parents have active children, so to ensure children reap the benefits of physical activity, such as muscle strength, cardiovascular health, and flexibility, children need to be exposed to an active lifestyle at home.”

“Given the nation's fight with obesity levels in children and the proven link between physical activity and classroom accomplishment, there is no question that P.E. should be an everyday part of every child's education,” says Greenberg. “Parents need to ensure that their children are getting the physical education they need from the schools and if they're not getting it, parents have options to make it happen.”

For More Information About VERB

The integrated VERB™ campaign uses advertising, marketing, events, and partnership activities to ensure that campaign messages reach children whenever they are looking for something physical to do. Through multicultural media partnerships, the campaign is designed to reach children from all socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds – including specific outreach for African Americans, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Hispanics/Latinos.

For an overview of the VERB campaign, campaign activities, partners, physical activity resources, and the campaign press room and to look at the latest advertising, log on to www.cdc.gov/VERB.

Check out the tween Web site, www.VERBnow.com, to find cool activities, trendy games, and interesting activity tips. Also featured are fun polls and quizzes and a calendar of events. The activity finder is a great way to find out places to get active in your community and discover new VERBs to try. Tweens also can record their activity every day by using My VERB Recorder.

The VERB Web site, www.VERBparents.com, is a valuable resource for busy parents who want to learn more about the VERB campaign and the importance of physical activity. The site includes an activity finder for parents to learn about new activities and resources to find those activities in their communities.

¹ School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS). Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2000.