MU Extension Resources Available for Increasing Physical Activity in Schools

Increasingly, through research and in practice, the importance of physical activity to improve health and learning is being recognized. This newsletter story focuses on two MU Extension programs, Jump Into Action and Active and Healthy Schools, which aim to increase physical activity in schools. In addition to highlighting those programs, this issue also announces a speaker at the Missouri Coordinated School Health Coalition Conference, who will be presenting about Action Based Learning.

Jump Into Action is an MU Extension program for fifth-grade students. It was developed, tested and evaluated by the Baylor School of Medicine. Over six years ago, it was updated and adapted by the University of Missouri Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology for use in Missouri schools. Since then, the program has reached more than 40,000 students in over 200 schools.

Some of the things that students in Jump Into Action learn include the connection between physical activity and healthy weight; how to use pedometers to see how active they are; how to trade screen time for 60 minutes of physical activity every day; how to set goals to drink more milk and fewer sweetened beverages; how to read nutrition facts and ingredient lists on food labels to make informed food choices; and that five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day is important for daily fiber intake.

The program is team-taught and involves the physical education teacher, the classroom teacher, the school nurse and parents.

(continued on page 2)
The use of physical activity lessons and pedometers helps students increase physical activity time; nutrition lessons and instructional materials help students make better food choices; a growth and development lesson helps students understand the rapid adolescent growth period; and goal-setting and support for students helps them improve their choices regarding physical activity and eating.

One fifth-grade teacher using Jump Into Action said “the pedometers grabbed the students’ attention and the activity books had an incredibly high visual interest level. My students loved them. I am impressed by the information about nutrition and physical activity that we can share with parents and students alike.”

Jump Into Action was designed to be used during the fifth grade year when lessons can be taught twice a week for four to six weeks. For more information about bringing Jump Into Action to your school, please contact Margie Meyer, MU Extension Project Manager for Jump Into Action, at 573-884-8711 or meyermm@missouri.edu.

Active and Healthy Schools Program
Active and Healthy Schools is another physical activity-based program available through MU Extension. This program, developed at Arizona State University and adapted for use in Missouri, is currently being used in select elementary schools in Lafayette County and in the St. Louis area. Although the goal is to make the program available statewide, it is currently being piloted in only a few schools in order to demonstrate efficacy and sustainability.
Schools using this program encourage classroom teachers to facilitate activity breaks throughout the day. In addition, teachers and playground supervisors encourage students to be active during recess on a zoned playground. A zoned playground has activities for children of all physical activity levels and may include things like jumping rope, walking on a marked trail, hopscotch, basketball and four-square. Research suggests that 70% of children are active on a zoned playground compared to 30% on a regular playground.

Active and Healthy Schools also has a nutrition component, which consists of working with school foodservice personnel to increase healthy options in the cafeteria, increase the availability of healthy food in vending machines and reward students for making healthy food choices at lunch and throughout the day.

To watch a short video about Active and Healthy Schools in Missouri, visit the following website: http://extension.missouri.edu/news/DisplayStory.aspx?N=759. For more information about the Active and Healthy Schools program, visit the following website: http://www.activeandhealthyschools.com/ or contact Dr. Steve Ball, MU Extension, at ballsd@missouri.edu.

**Missouri Coordinated School Health Coalition Conference**

Jean Blaydes Madigan – Action Based Learning (http://abllab.com) – will present the keynote address and three concurrent workshops at the upcoming Missouri Coordinated School Health Coalition Conference on Friday, December 3, 2010. For more information and to register, please review the registration form: http://www.healthykidsmo.org/events/2010_Registration_Brochure.pdf

In addition, there will be other concurrent topics at the conference related to schools, parents and communities that would be of interest to grantees. Following are the descriptions of Jean’s presentations:

**Keynote – How Brain Research Links Movement to Learning**

Physical activity gives students the advantage they need for increased student performance. Educators who understand how the brain works can better teach students. This interactive presentation will summarize recent brain research by neuroscientists that links movement to learning and will advocate, validate, educate and motivate for bringing movement and physical activity into the learning process. (continued on page 3)
Concurrent 1 – “Know” Brainers: Easy Academic Activities That Move Kids to Learn

Brain research suggests the link of movement to increased learning. Students learn through movement and memory is increased with fun and engaging lessons. Know Brainers are simple, quick, interactive lessons that reinforce academics through movement based on the brain research that supports the link of movement to learning. They can be used as transitions, brain breaks or review. In this interactive, fun-filled presentation reading and math will come alive with kinesthetic teaching strategies that may increase student performance.

Concurrent 2 – Action Based Academics

Neuroscientists are advocating the importance of movement and physical activity in the learning process stating, “One of the best ways to maximize the brain is through movement.” “Physical activity contributes to better student performance.” and “Exercise seems to boost brain function.” This interactive presentation will emphasize literacy and language acquisition using kinesthetic teaching strategies. Literacy lessons will come alive to increase student performance.

Concurrent 3 – Teaching the Teenage Brain

The teenage brain is different from an adult brain and a child’s brain. Recent brain research gives incredible insight to the complicated workings of the teen brain and body. This energetic interactive presentation will give valuable information that will enable teachers and parents to better understand teenage behavior and learning.

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**MU Extension Resources Available for Increasing Physical Activity in Schools (continued from page 3)**

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**MFH Healthy & Active Communities—Implementation Team**

**Purpose:**
The MU Extension Implementation Team provides grantees with assistance in implementing project activities. They are available by phone and email and for meetings in your community to provide program implementation support. Types of assistance might include: program specific assistance on topics such as worksite wellness, farm to school, and starting and sustaining community gardens; recruiting participants for community initiatives; fostering organizational buy-in and support; effectively engaging policy makers; and strategies to build community-partnerships to ensure program sustainability.

**Primary Contact:**
Ann Cohen, MS, RD, LD
Phone: 573-882-2435
E-mail: CohenA@missouri.edu

**Secondary Contact:**
Casi Lock, MS
Phone: 573-882-9986
E-mail: LockC@missouri.edu

http://extension.missouri.edu/healthylife/