

Research Evaluation of Play On!

Play On!: Playground Learning Activities for Youth Fitness

About the Program



Play On! is a standards-based physical fitness program created in partnership with the American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation (AAPAR) a division of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (AAHPERD). The Play On! Program promotes physical fitness through the use of six key elements of play

and fun creative learning activities. This program fully aligns with the national physical education standards promoted

by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) and can help promote moderate to vigorous levels of physical activity to combat childhood obesity. Play On! was developed to provide educators with an easy to implement hands-on fitness guide and program for the playground that is effective, and simple to use.

The 6 elements of play were identified by experts Russell Carson, Department of Kinesiology, and Marybeth Lima, Department of Biological & Agricultural Engineering, of Louisiana State University, who served as the authors of the program.



Developed in partnership with



Research Findings

Playgrounds are familiar, accessible, and enjoyable places to keep kids and adults moving, socializing and learning together. They promote developmentally appropriate skills, age appropriate challenge and healthy risk taking, and develop a lifelong love of participating in healthy physical activity. Research results were overwhelmingly positive and indicated that Play On! Was effective in promoting physical activity for children.

- 91% of the teachers reported that their use of their playground increased
- 90% of teachers planned on continuing to use the program in the future
- 100% rated the program 4-5 on a 5 point scale, with 5 denoting “super easy” to use
- 1/4 of parents reported participating in more physical activity with their child after the Play On!! program was initiated
- 100% of students reported having fun engaging in Play On! activities
- 90-100% of teachers reported that the playground curriculum was to motivate students to participate in regular, vigorous, enjoyable physical activity in a safe and supervised environment

“In summary, we as researchers and evaluators of this project have full confidence to support the implementation of the Play On! curriculum as a means of maintaining and improving regular and fun participation in physical activity for young children.”

— Dr. Liu and Dr. Ayres
Western Michigan University



Childhood Obesity Epidemic

The statistics are daunting... Nearly one third of children in America are considered overweight or obese. According to the Surgeon General, "Only thirty-six percent of students are physically active for sixty minutes a day."

But a growing awareness and national movement is

taking place to combat the childhood obesity epidemic through a more unified and comprehensive approach. Now more than ever, it is essential that we implement research-based programs that are effective in promoting physical activity and develop a lifelong love of fitness in youth.

Research Methodology



Through a research grant contributed by AAPAR, Dr. Yuanglong Liu and Dr. Suzan F. Ayers of the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreations, Western Michigan University, developed and implemented an objective analysis of the Play On! Program. They conducted a national study

to evaluate the program that provided specific information about the correlation between the program and physical activity benefits. Fourteen schools were selected through a national Beta Site selection process through AAPAR, in which schools submitted an application to volunteer to participate in the research. Approximately 6,000 children participated from February to May 2009. Research included a series of pre- and post- intervention surveys completed by the teacher, children, parents, as well as two focus groups at one of the Beta Sites to qualitatively measure physical activity and skill development.

Beta Sites and Beta Site Leaders

Weaver Elementary-
Springfield, MO

Virginia Austin

Bissett Elementary-
Springfield, MO

Virginia Austin

Delaware Elementary-
Springfield, MO

Tobin Bushman

Sequiota Elementary-
Springfield, MO

Eafton Hill

Truman Elementary-Springfield, MO

Brenda Sneed

Campbell Elementary-Springfield, MO

David McDonald

Disney Elementary-Springfield, MO

Ken Norton

Bowerman Elementary-Springfield, MO

Jim Twibell

Cowden Elementary-Springfield, MO

Lee Squibb

Fultondale Elementary, Fultondale, AL

Ann Holcomb

Port O'Conner Elementary-Port O'Conner, TX

Jenny O'Neill

Independence Elementary-Lewisville, TX

Emily Fulcher

Petal Primary School K-12-Petal, MS

John Lindsey

English Estates Elementary-Sanford, FL

Alisa Barrios



"The Play On! Program is an exciting opportunity to extend our physical education classroom to the outdoors. Through creative learning, the *Play On!* Curriculum arouses the student's sense of curiosity, imagination and adventure to achieve a healthy, active lifestyle."

- Theresa Boehm Miller, Curriculum Development Chair,
Springfield Public Schools, Springfield, MO

For more information, visit www.playcore.com

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