of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

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Catch the Catawba SPARK

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ABSTRACT

Catch the Catawba SPARK was designed to increase the physical activity level of children enrolled in Head Start. Head Start teachers and their aides were trained in the delivery of SPARK (Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids) physical education. They were also provided with the SPARK curriculum guide and PE equipment at the beginning of the school year, 2000-2001. A SPARK PE mentor visited the school at least once per month to provide assistance with the implementation of SPARK.

Before and six months after the training and the subsequent delivery of SPARK PE, indirect measures of physical activity were assessed for the 4- and 5-year old students. Measures included body mass index (BMI), TV-viewing habits, parental attitudes & beliefs, and aerobic fitness.

The teachers reported that the training was very useful and the SPARK curriculum guide and PE equipment was used often. As part of the Head Start requirements, teachers must engage their students in physical activity daily. They felt that the *Catch the Catawba SPARK* program helped add activity to the students' day compared to last year. While the measures of the children did not change over the six-month period, a valuable service was provided to the Head Start schools, and it is hoped that the students exposed to SPARK will be on their way toward developing an active lifestyle.

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