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[Health & Medicine](#), [Obesity](#)



Travis Dwyer Topic: Childhood Obesity " Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live." -Jim Rohn There are so many prevalent health issues that need to be addressed in today's society. Since children are considered to be our hope for the future, I chose to research the epidemic of childhood obesity. As an aspiring physical education teacher or as alarmed to learn that " prevalence for overweight children aged 6-11 years has almost tripled in 25 years, increasing from 6. 5% to 18. 8% between 1980 and 2004 (1). " Of course there are so many contributing factors to this increase in weight in today's world. In my opinion, children spend the majority of their days being sedentary in school and often come home to play video or computer games. After school snacks often include processed foods such as cookies and chips. In this troubled economy, both parents typically work full time jobs and as a result have less time to prepare healthy meals for their children. Families often eat " take-out" or " fast food" during the week. These meals are not only rich in calories but often provide oversized portions that are too large for child consumption. Unfortunately, parents don't typically have the time to take their children to parks after school or to engage in physical activities with them on a regular basis. There are so many reasons that childhood obesity is on the rise, not only in America but throughout the world. I want to become a physical education teacher to inspire children to develop healthful habits that they can continue to use throughout their lives. I also hope to teach children how to appreciate and engage in physical activity on a daily basis as a coping mechanism for stressful situations they may encounter through the years. In this paper, I chose to focus on possible solutions and strategies to help combat future childhood obesity. When it comes to eating

right and exercising, there is no " I'll start tomorrow."~Terri Guillemets

Throughout my years at school I loved playing all types of sports and actively played football, baseball, and basketball all through high school. I was always inspired by professional athletes and they served as positive role models in my adolescent years. The first research article I chose incorporates professional sports organizations, communities, and schools to help children develop healthy eating and exercising habits. " Get Fit with the Grizzlies: A Community-School-Home Initiative to fight childhood obesity" follows the Memphis public school system as they implement a six week program and evaluate the effectiveness of the program. I think Memphis was a perfect place to conduct this study because, " The southern region of the United States registers the nation's highest childhood obesity rates, with the state of Tennessee ranked fourth nationally (2). " The population of students " consisted of every fourth and fifth grade student during the 2006-2007 school year (3). " The Memphis Grizzlies are a basketball team in Tennessee who partnered with local school districts to develop a mini unit focused on health and nutrition. The method of evaluation was an " 18 item student questionnaire. The questionnaire was examined by a panel of experts(4). " Students participated in " a 6 lesson supplemental mini-unit focusing on nutrition and exercise (5). " I really liked the fact that " parents were included in the lessons via homework and their signature was necessary on their child's Get Fit activity/food log (6). " In conclusion, the Get Fit with the Grizzlies program yielded extremely positive results. Students " gained knowledge of necessary health information to which they had not been exposed and moderate physical activity behaviors were significantly

healthier (7). " Researchers did find some negative aspects of the program as well. They felt that the program was too short to be effective for long term use and the " variable of parental influence was not assessed (8). " As a future educator, I feel programs like this would be successful in many schools because children admire professional athletes. I also feel parental and community involvement is essential for a successful program. Local stores could offer discounts on healthy foods or exercise equipment to motivate both parents and children. Irwin CC, Irwin RL, Miller ME, Somes GW, Richey PA. Get Fit with the grizzlies: a community-school-home initiative to fight childhood obesity. J Sch Health. 2010; 80: 333-339 The second research article also involved 5, 517 5th grade students, parents, and 282 school principals. This study measured the effectiveness of school lunch programs in combating childhood obesity. " 5th grade students and parents completed surveys and questionnaires regarding height, weight, nutritional choices, and physical activities. The questionnaires used were a modified version of the Harvard Youth Adolescent Food Frequency Questionnaire (9). " The difference between this study and the first study I discussed is that there is a control group. Schools that implemented a healthy menu and incorporated physical activity and health education into their program were surveyed as well as schools that did not have the same procedures in effect. According to the article, Effectiveness of School Programs in Preventing Childhood Obesity: A Multilevel Comparison, " students from schools participating in a coordinated program for healthy eating initiatives exhibited significantly lower rates of overweight and obesity, had healthier diets, and reported more physical activities than students from schools without nutrition

programs (10). " Although the findings are promising, these researchers also agreed that more studies need to be done to reach more conclusive results. Veugeliers, Fitzgerald, Effectiveness of School Programs in Preventing Childhood Obesity: A Multilevel Comparison. American Journal of Public Health. March 2005, Vol. 95, No. 3 The third article I chose to discuss recognizes the importance of developing healthy feeding habits in early infancy. This article would be most beneficial for new parents as well as early childhood educators. According to the article Recognizing and Preventing Childhood Obesity, " Experts have suggested that gestation to early infancy is a critical period in which physiological changes occur that greatly influence a child's later risk for obesity (11). " I was surprised to learn that " evidence points to early infancy as one of the most critical time periods in the development of risk for obesity and chronic disease. Babies with a higher birth weight have an increased risk for future obesity (12). " The article further discusses how parents should allow their child to eat intuitively. For example, if a child pushes the bottle away do not force them to finish or to clean their plates. The doctors also discussed how watching more than two hours of television a day as well as sleeping less than 12 hours a day are contributing factors that put infants at an increased risk for childhood obesity (13). This article truly proves how important it is to teach children healthy habits from the earliest stages of infancy. Dolinsky, Siega-Riz, Perrin, Armstrong, Recognizing and Preventing Childhood Obesity. Contemporary Pediatrics, January 2011 After conducting much research, I firmly feel that combating childhood obesity must involve parents, schools, and community members. In order to be successful it must be a group effort. When I become

a physical education teacher I hope to help implement nutrition incentive programs and provide fun activities that students will want to continue practicing on their own. Educators and administrators need to be consistent with program implementation that must be continued throughout the year. Parents and teachers need to work together to develop healthful habits for children of all ages. I liked the idea of an activity log that parents must sign discussed in the first study. This concept makes both parents and students accountable for their health. I am hopeful that children can be encouraged to make healthy choices with the help of informed adults. I believe that eating nutritious foods and being physically active will help children make good choices and handle stress more effectively.