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NORTH CAROLINA'S CHILDREN AT RISK FOR OBESITY-RELATED DISEASE \$4 Million Grant Program Provides an Alarming First Look of the Health and Fitness of the State's Children in Grades K-8

RALEIGH, NC, FEBRUARY 3, 2011 – Nearly half of North Carolina's elementary and middle school aged children may be at risk for childhood obesity and its related diseases. Fitness testing results from more than 82,000 NC students find, according to body mass index (BMI) data, 43 percent are at risk for metabolic syndrome, a group of risk factors including a high BMI and poor physical fitness, that may lead to cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

"The warning signs were here years ago. This is the final wakeup call – 43 percent cannot be ignored. We know healthy children learn better, and are more likely to become globally competitive, highly skilled, productive workers. Obesity and metabolic syndrome of this scale will severely challenge an already overburdened healthcare system, our wallets, and even our children's odds of living long enough to see their grandchildren. Today's overweight and obese youth are already a threat to national security – too few are physically fit enough to join the military. The problems are large scale and numerous. Every parent, policy maker, educator, and child must make physical education and fitness top priorities," said NCAAHPERD Executive Director Dr. Ron Morrow.

The findings are a result of the In-School Prevention of Obesity and Disease (IsPOD) initiative, a \$4 million grant program supported by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. IsPOD combines SPARK™, a standardized, evidence-based PE curriculum proven to reduce childhood obesity with the nation's first fitness testing solution at a statewide level. In addition, IsPOD includes a unique survey designed to monitor challenges, perceptions, and behaviors of students and PE teachers – the educators who have seen first-hand physical fitness decline for decades. More than 2,200 PE teachers are participating in the program in more than 90 school systems across North Carolina. IsPOD is scheduled to launch statewide by August 2012.

Among other findings found in [a 92-page report](#): children are failing to meet critical guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Pediatric Association (APA):

- 70 percent fail to achieve daily physical activity lasting 60 minutes per day, seven days a week. (CDC Guideline)
- 47 percent spend two hours or more per school day on screen time, which includes long periods of inactivity while watching television, playing computer or video games and using mobile devices. (The APA recommends less than two hours per day.)
- Milk consumption drops significantly as children age – 31 percent of third graders consume the recommended three cups or more of milk per day. By grade eight, only one in five children are consuming three cups or more of milk. (CDC Guideline)

“Although data of this scale is unlike anything we have ever seen before, IsPOD combats childhood obesity head-on using the SPARK™ curriculum, which for the first time, provides every student with the same high quality, low-competitive physical education. PE is not what it used to be. Instead of long periods of inactivity for roll call, stretching, activity demonstration, and teaming, thousands of PE teachers in the state get students moving as soon as they enter the gym. IsPOD gives our physical educators validation that their profession is not only valued, but crucially relevant to solving one of our greatest challenges,” said NCAAHPERD Director of Grants and Special Programs Judy Martino.

The findings are based on data from more than 82,000 students obtained in the Spring 2010 semester. Due to program expansion and software enhancements, results from Fall 2010 will be based on data from more than 214,000 students. More than 1 million NC students will be participating by the end of 2012 making it one of the largest longitudinal population studies in the US.

“Since 2006, we have collected data on hundreds of thousands of K-8 aged children. We plan to align our findings with other measurements of student performance, such as academic performance, drop-out rates, truancy rates, and other factors. We believe there may be a strong correlation between the amount of daily physical education and a school’s overall performance. If a school increases the amount of daily PE, the school may excel in all other areas. More quality physical education could be our most efficient and highest return on investment in reducing childhood obesity and keeping North Carolina economically competitive,” said Morrow.

IT IS TIME TO GET INVOLVED

The fight against childhood obesity is a collaborative process. Parents are encouraged to contact their child’s physical education teacher and offer assistance. In addition, stay informed of health and physical education news – begin by viewing the full report and learn more about IsPOD at <http://www.ispod.info>

[View more findings in the 92-page evaluation at the IsPOD website.](#)

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About NCAAHPERD

Established in 1921, the North Carolina Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (NCAAHPERD) is a professional organization and advocacy group for North Carolina's more than 3,000 educators in motion, representing educators of athletics, health, physical education, recreation, dance, and sport management. NCAAHPERD provides professional development, scholarship, and special grant-funded programs, such as the In-school Prevention of Obesity and Disease (IsPOD). Learn more at www.ncaahperd.org and www.ispod.info