

W.Va. Schools Get Game to Fight Obesity



AP Photo: Mark Shephard, 18, and Stephanie Bellman, 18, follow the arrows on a television screen while...

By ALLISON BARKER, Associated Press Writer

Wed Jan 25, 9:48 AM ET

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - West Virginia, which has one of the nation's worst obesity problems, is expanding a project that uses a video game to boost students' physical activity.

All of the state's 157 middle schools are expecting to get the video game "Dance Dance Revolution," and officials hope to put it in all 753 public schools within three years. A pilot project began in 20 schools last spring.

Students 10 to 14 years old are being targeted first because it is a key point in children's development, said Linda Carson, a professor at West Virginia University's School of Physical Education in Morgantown.

Those are the ages "when children really begin making more of their own decisions and a time when they could easily choose to be more sedentary," said Carson, who is conducting an ongoing research project into the video game's health benefits.

Game players move their feet on a special mat to correspond to arrows that scroll on the TV screen. The player must tap the same symbols on the mat at just the right time to do well.

The game is not meant to replace physical education and health classes. Rather, it is one more option that may appeal to students who often dislike other sports.

"If we can get children to change their behavior at a young age they hopefully will grow up to be healthy, active adults, which would have a positive effect on health care costs," said Carl Callison with Mountain State Blue Cross.

West Virginia is consistently among the top three states for obesity, with about a third of its residents considered obese and even more overweight, according to the state Bureau of Public Health.

Nearly 46 percent of 31,000 fifth-graders screened in a coronary artery risk project from 1999-2005 were considered overweight or obese, according to the Institute of Medicine guidelines.

Extra weight can lead to high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, some cancers and other problems. West Virginia leads the nation in high blood pressure and is fourth in diabetes.

"One out of three children born in West Virginia today will have diabetes by the time they grow up," said Nidia Henderson, health promotions manager for the public employees insurance

ADVERTISEMENT

Learn about an HIV therapy

Just once a day!

[Learn More!](#)

56°
Palo Alto

TODAY	THU	FRI
58° 38°	61° 37°	58° 38°

YOUR WEATHER RIGHT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS **YAHOO!** WIDGETS
▶ GET IT NOW - FREE

FULL COVERAGE



Bird Flu

Get the latest news, video and photos.

FROM Y! HEALTH



Health Questions?

Find answers on Yahoo! Health:

Search

» [More from Y! Health](#)

program. "That's a devastating statistic and not acceptable."

Search:

The state also has turned to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta for help.

The school project starts with the state's 64,880 middle school students and then calls for an expansion into high schools. By year three, state officials hope to have the project set up in the state's elementary schools.

Overall, the game is expected to be available to 279,788 public school students statewide.

The statewide project is expected to cost \$500,000, with part of the funding coming from PEIA and Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield. Game manufacturer Konami Digital Entertainment in Redwood City, Calif., has agreed to provide \$75,000. The state is seeking private funding for the remainder.

Each school is to receive a game console, at least two dance pads and software at a cost of about \$740.

[Email Story](#) [IM Story](#) [Discuss](#) [Printable View](#)

RECOMMEND THIS STORY

Recommend It:

Average (91 votes)



[» Recommended Stories](#)

Health News

- [Iraqi Authorities Go on Bird-Flu Alert](#), AP
- [Report: 8M With Birth Defects Each Year](#) AP
- [Panel: Teflon Chemical a Likely Carcinogen](#) AP
- [Tests Show Potential for Ricin Vaccine](#) AP
- [Turkey Seems to Be Winning Bird Flu Fight](#) AP

Most Viewed - Health

- [Panel: Teflon Chemical a Likely Carcinogen](#) AP
- [Report: 8M With Birth Defects Each Year](#) AP
- [Primary care about to collapse, physicians warn](#) Reuters
- [Tests Show Potential for Ricin Vaccine](#) AP
- [Turkey Seems to Be Winning Bird Flu Fight](#) AP

All News & Blogs Search Advanced