

I'm Moving I'm Learning [Transcript]

[Singing:] I'm movin', I'm learnin', I'm movin', I'm learnin', I'm learning to move and I'm movin' to learn so come on everybody help me sing this song. I'm movin', ...

Narrator: When this generation of children grows into adulthood, how healthy can we expect them to be? For the past twenty years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has tracked the rise in obesity rates of American adults. Watch as an American health crisis unfolds before your eyes. Every year since 1985, we see the rates of adult obesity increasing, as this color-coded map so dramatically shows.

It spreads across the U.S. like an impending tsunami. The children of these adults are also gaining weight. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, childhood obesity has risen dramatically in the United States in the past decade, particularly among young children from low income and minority groups.

Linda Carson: Well, in America incidence the overweight obesity in preschool children is estimated to have risen to twenty-one percent. In some urban areas, like New York City, Baltimore, and Chicago, the incidence in children served by Head Start is even higher: thirty to forty percent. And in some areas, some rural areas, in northern Maine for example, the incidence is as high as fifty percent.

So, this is a very critical issue for children of low income and minority groups, children served by Head Start. Many children spend hours in front of a screen each day, and this has contributed to the high incidence of reported sedentary behavior in children who, generations ago, would have been very active. Their nutrition is a problem, specifically for low income groups, and it's because good nutrition is expensive.

Access to fresh fruits and vegetables, access to organically-grown fruits and vegetables, and whole foods, tends to be more expensive than fast food and processed, boxed foods, and so this is a problem. Young children are not just naturally healthy or naturally fit just because they're young. Developing healthy preferences and influencing children to adopt healthy, active lifestyles is a primary prevention model that shows great promise in developing a healthier generation of children.

Narrator: Recognizing the profound importance of establishing healthy lifestyle preferences early in life, the Region III Office of the Administration for Children and Families initiated a pilot project in Fiscal 2005 designed to prevent and reverse the negative consequences of obesity in Head Start children. The Region III approach is called "I am moving, I am learning."

It promotes health, and addresses childhood obesity by being more intentional about the quality and quantity of physical activity Head Start children are engaged in, and by reinforcing the importance of good nutrition for children. Perhaps the best way to describe "I am moving, I am learning" is to describe what it is not.

This is not about physical education classes for Head Start kids. This is not about pulling children out of the classroom and going to a gym. This is not about team sports, and it's not about athletic competitions, and it does not require expensive equipment. [Music]

This initiative, or "movement", as we like to call it, is significant. It's important. It's research-based. It's developmentally appropriate. It's grounded in the Performance Standards, and the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework. This work is integrated into existing Head Start curricula in classroom routines, as well as family routines. It's imbedded in what grantees are already doing. It makes a stronger connection between physical fitness, emotional wellness and school readiness.

It creates a new intentionality to introducing movement and nutrition activities. It is a proactive approach because it focuses on prevention, and it targets young children under the age of five, as well as parents, Head Start staff and the larger community. "I.M.I.L." has three overall goals.

Amy Requa: Our first goal with "I am moving, I am learning" is to increase moderate to vigorous physical activity for children every day, to meet the national guidelines for physical activity. Our second goal is improve the quality of the movement experiences that they have every day, that are facilitated by the parents and the teachers. And, what this does is it teaches them about how their body moves.

Our culture is so sedentary that children, when they begin to move and their heart rate goes up and their breathing rate goes up, they think there's something wrong. Our third goal is to increase the healthy choices for children that we make every day, and this is not only in the classroom, but also outside of the classroom and in the home. So - healthy choices for children, every day.

And it's so important to establish this when they're young, 'cause then that's when they get into the habits of making healthy choices. It's much harder to break those bad habits than to establish good habits.

Narrator: I.M.I.L. is unique because of it's approach. I.M.I.L. provides Head Start teachers and parents with effective activities, strategies and resources. These are designed to infuse, integrate and embed high quality activity experiences and healthy food choices within their familiar early childhood development curricula and daily routines. Lively music that both children and adults can enjoy is used to stimulate physical activity in the classroom, and at home.

Because I.M.I.L. is an enhancement for a program's existing curriculum approach rather than an overlay, teachers are willing to increase movement and healthy nutrition experiences within their own lesson plans, using a variety of I.M.I.L. strategies, activities, music, and easy-to-make props. Programs are encouraged to select a friendly character as a healthy role model. This strategy provides consistency from the role model who children can relate to and emulate.

Characters can be more consistent, and at times, more influential, than adults. For example, some programs have chosen a character named "Choosy" to reinforce healthy messages and behaviors with lively songs and activities. Such appealing characters encourage young children and adults to form lifelong preferences for physical activity and healthy nutrition.

With I.M.I.L., we have already seen concrete measurable and positive benefits occur, such as an increase in the amount of time children spend in M.V.P.A. during the day. For example, we have seen a doubling and tripling of the quantity of time they're moving during daily routines.

Amy: Children that needed more redirection because they had behavior issues; when there's more movement and learning going on in the classroom, they tend to need less redirection, so it's had a positive impact on their behavior as well.

Narrator: We have also seen similar benefits for Head Start teaching staff. Marcie Gaylor: I have done this for -- it's probably been about a year -- a little over a year now, and when I started doing this I noticed that I was losing weight myself. And, I have lost thirty-five to forty pounds since last April and this is the first winter that I have not gained any of that weight back by just doing what the kids are doing and doing it every day with them and modeling for them.

Narrator: I.M.I.L. is about moving more every day, as well as about learning how to move. I.M.I.L. offers a rich array of resources and strategies to increase teacher and parent understanding of motor-skill development using a movement vocabulary framework. Through training, adults learn to build their understanding of how movement skills develop appropriately in young children, including jumping, hopping, skipping, galloping, throwing, striking and catching, to name a few.

Amy: "I am moving, I am learning" is not just about moving -- it's about learning, too, and it is an early childhood developmental approach in the sense that moving and learning are a foundation for school readiness. They go hand-in-hand, just like the mind and the body. They need to be developed together.

Narrator: Moving and learning are intertwined, and cannot be separated. Together, they build a solid foundation for healthy growth and development, early learning and school readiness. Staff is on board, parents are on board, local communities are even coming on board. Grantees have found unique and creative ways to implement I.M.I.L., like

linking this to their Fatherhood initiatives, and getting fathers to help with movement in the classroom.

Some grantees have even designed "I am moving" t-shirts for adults and children. The I.M.I.L. child obesity prevention team in Region III was the recent recipient of the 2006 A.C.F. honor Partnering for H.H.S. Excellence award. Some grantees are working with their state collaboration offices and Head Start Associations to identify potential funding and sharing training opportunities.

The I.M.I.L. approach has inspired Head Start programs to use fun and creative strategies to empower parents, staff and communities to each do their part to tackle this epidemic of obesity. Together, we can all be advocates for children's health and well-being. We can influence their habits early on in life when preferences for physical activity and healthy food choices are being formed.

We can do our best to build healthy lifestyles for our children for many years to come, so keep moving -- and keep learning! [Singing:] I'm movin', I'm learnin', I'm movin', I'm learnin', I'm learning to move and I'm movin' to learn so come on everybody help me sing this song. I'm movin', I'm learnin', I'm learning to move and I'm movin' to learn so I have a healthy body my whole life long. I'm movin', I'm learnin'...

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