

Jump Start Teens: Interactive, Cross-curricular Lessons for High School Adolescents

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INTRODUCTION

Healthy eating habits and regular physical activity are essential to the health and well-being of all adolescents. Data from the 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Surveillance, however, showed that among high school adolescents in California, only 32.5% were eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day. More than one-quarter of the adolescents surveyed ate more than two servings of foods typically high in fat during the day preceding the survey. At the time of the survey, 54.4% of California adolescents were enrolled in a physical education class, and, of those, only 38.1% attended daily.¹

These findings have likely contributed to the 60% overall increase in obesity in the last two decades among adolescents 12 to 19 years old in the United States.² They also emphasize the importance of continuing primary prevention efforts throughout adolescence.³

Food on the Run (FOR) is a school-based program of California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition) (CPL) that prompts high school students to advocate for additional healthy food and physical activity options, advances policy and environmental changes that promote healthy eating and physical activity options in the school, and motivates students to eat healthily and engage in more physical activities. CPL

found that there was a deficiency in nutrition and physical activity resources for high school teachers to use with students. Therefore, the California Department of Education, Nutrition Education and Training program awarded a grant to CPL to develop the *Jump Start Teens* resource kit as one part of the FOR program.

PURPOSE

Jump Start is a set of eight interactive cross-curricular lessons. The learning content of the lessons is based on the comprehensive school health principles and benefits high school students by integrating physical activity and nutrition into various subject areas with information delivered in “teenspeak” and promoting active learning through a hands-on approach that includes consumer and advocacy components for media-, community-, and school-based activities involving the school, parents, and the community.

IMPLEMENTATION

The eight *Jump Start* lessons are as follows:

1. *The ABC's of Healthy Eating.* Students compare what they typically eat in a day with the Food Guide Pyramid and learn the link between eating habits and their physical and mental health.
2. *Let's Get Physical.* Students assess their personal level of physical activity, learn the benefits of adding it to their daily lives, and learn new ways to incorporate more, with an emphasis on lifelong physical activity.
3. *Teens Making a Difference.* Students explore the importance of their opinions and then identify a project they want to work on to make a positive difference in their school or community.
4. *Advertising's Hidden Messages.* Students critically examine advertisements to become smarter consumers.
5. *It's In the Label—The Food Label.* Students compare the fat and other contents of similar foods by

learning to read the Nutrition Facts on food labels.

6. *Have It Your Way Fast Food.* Students learn how to make healthier choices at fast-food restaurants.
7. *Eating to Win.* Students learn about common sports nutrition misconceptions that are targeted toward athletes and coaches, as well as healthy pre-game eating and fluid intake.
8. *Making News.* Students learn about the media's impact on consumer behavior and how they can use it as a resource to highlight their perspectives and creative accomplishments.

On the first page of each lesson, in a sidebar, the student learning objectives are listed. Also listed in that sidebar are the approximate time needed to teach the lesson, preparation steps, and the lesson's cross-curricular links (e.g., math, physical education, journalism, language arts, social studies) (Fig. 1).

The lessons begin with a brief overview of the topic followed by “Activity Steps,” which include directions and explanations for the interactive classroom activities. The activities range from simple introductory activities to more in-depth, challenging activities that involve the acquisition of skills and knowledge. There is also a section titled “Extensions” that has optional activities for students to do. Finally, “Teacher Background Information” includes basic information about the topic and references to other resources. Accompanying each lesson are supplementary materials, which consist of overheads, activity sheets, quizzes, and handouts, as well as materials in Spanish (Fig. 2).

EVALUATION

Jump Start was student and teacher tested and included input from marketing, health, and education professionals throughout its development. In 1996, focus groups were conducted with students and teachers from a variety of subject areas in three California cities. Based on the focus group findings, *Jump Start's* layout and content were developed and revised.

In 1997, *Jump Start* was field tested in the classrooms of three California public high schools and went through its final revisions based on those results. *Jump Start* was completed in 1998 and distributed to a number of schools statewide. In that year, it was reviewed on its "Instructional Design," "Skill Development Components," and "Teaching Methods" by the California Department of Education, Healthy Kids Resource Center; it received their highest rating.

In 1999, *Jump Start* was evaluated to learn how it was being used and by whom. Among those who had used it by that time, the response was very positive, specifically in terms of its ease of use, the level and types of activities within each lesson, and the supplementary materials. Responders indicated favorably that *Jump Start* did not require much planning to use. The evaluation also found that it was effective with novice teachers and easy to use even without having a background in health. Among respondents, *Jump Start* was being used in a variety of classes: physical education, home economics, culinary arts, science, nutrition, and media.

NOTE

Please contact the corresponding author for more information or visit our Website at <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/lean> to access an order form or to download the entire kit.

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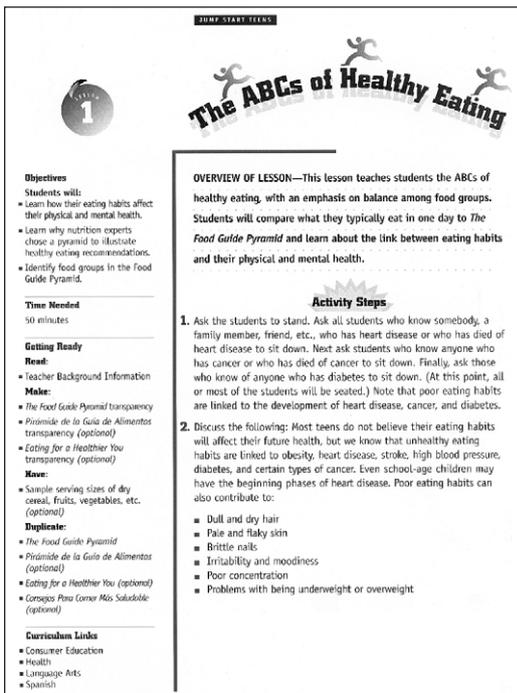


Figure 1. Example of first page of a *Jump Start* nutrition lesson.

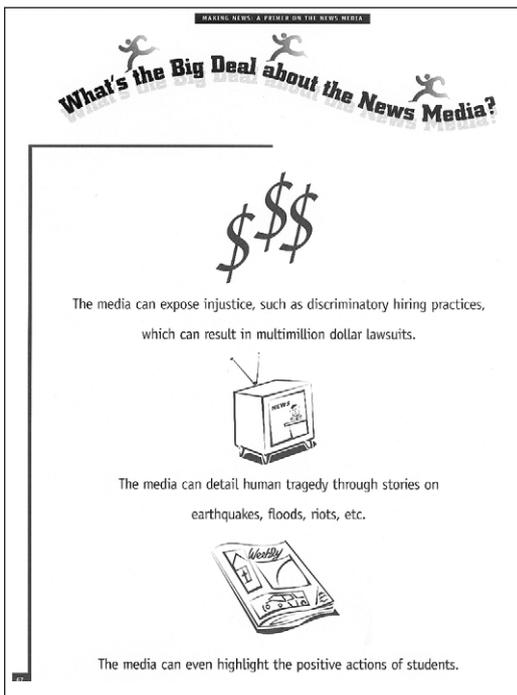


Figure 2. Example of supplementary material for a media lesson.