

16 Physical Fitness for Our Children

Issue/Problem

The title of this proposal says it all.

In the sixties, President John F. Kennedy initiated and promoted a somewhat revolutionary physical fitness movement in America. Regrettably over the years that program has become a non-issue in many of our public school systems and with the public in general.

Due to various reasons the physical fitness movement and concern for it has lost its priority in public school programs of America. Please know that I am not a fitness nut, but I know of my own disappointment as I observed the decline physical education programs in our public schools over the years, primarily due to budget cuts and the fear of frivolous lawsuits.

Consequently as study after study documents, and unfortunately our own eyes observe daily too many Americans are over-weight and out-of-shape. Therefore, more of us are putting our health in jeopardy and as a natural by-product are driving up our nation's current and future health care costs.

The Plain Truth is that we Americans need to be in better shape in order to enjoy a healthier, longer life — we need refresh President Kennedy's fitness movement across our nation.

Seriously consider that with the coming of National Health Care Insurance we will all be contributing to and helping to pay for the nation's health care bill! Therefore, we will naturally and prudently become more interested and informed about our own health and how to better maintain our bodies through better (not perfect) eating habits and some simple, regular exercise.

The People's Sense

Physical Fitness – Pre-K thru 12

This proposal addresses the physical fitness of America's youth in particular and addresses the excess weight that many of them are carrying and their general lack of physical conditioning. I will not bother you with any of the statistics we hear constantly. It is simply fair to say we all recognize the short and long-term negative impacts on the health of our children (e.g., diabetes) and the avoidable healthcare costs generated, as well.

Several years ago, one of my own doctors brought this issue to my attention. It is one of his personal concerns about the public's and especially children's

health. He suggested that I add the issue to my list of things to research and write about. So I did.

Some time later, I was channel surfing one evening and watched a portion of an infomercial for Mari Winsor's well-known Winsor Pilate® personal exercise program. I observed that it could be strenuous and very productive, but was a low-impact exercise program that a person performs lying on the floor, preferably on a mat with no active, aerobic movement involved. The program includes basic to advanced workout routines, and the advertised cost of the full package was under \$100 at that time.

Pilate is often talked about and are routinely used by actors, actresses, athletes, super models and other highly visible people that are concerned with maintaining their appearance and physical conditioning. Therefore, kids (and adults) could be very encouraged by that group recommending its use.

Of course some regular exercise is a great concept for all of us regardless of age, but taking the time and having the discipline to do it on a regular basis is difficult. It occurred to me that the Pilate program could easily and inexpensively be placed in every public school, K-12 in the country, even colleges. A few parents school could donate the money to buy the set(s) of program videos for their children's school. The most equipment required would be simple floor mats. It would be "pennies" per student to implement – the low cost to high benefit ratio would be outrageous!

The standard workout is 20 or 30 minutes in duration and needs to be accomplished three or four times a week. This would be a natural addition to the public school physical education program. All students would participate. The kids are there, the exercises are simple, each student would progress at their own rate, and over the initial weeks and months all children would slowly build up their fitness and experience the personal results.

Local fitness trainers in every community in the country could volunteer to help get the program implemented properly in the schools. This program will yield tremendous results for the U.S. Sport and Fitness industry as our children and their parents begin to see the benefits of basic exercise and more physical activity.

This fitness approach is practically a no-brainer, and every parent that I have shared the concept with liked it. I believe this program to be a real winner for our society in many ways. It would help renew President Kennedy's national physical fitness movement. Many of us grew up with that program and still benefit today from the leadership and personal challenge that JFK gave us.

A Nutritional Side Benefit

Any viable diet program, recommends regular physical exercise along with the given eating regimen to increase the short and long-term benefits to be realized. In this scenario, it will be exercise that will indirectly lead many students to learn about and use better eating habits.

The benefits for the young are that they will:

- will learn the basics on physical conditioning.
- over a period of weeks and months they will see and feel the physical results of routine exercise on their own bodies.
- will become familiar with physical fitness as a normal part of life.
- will learn about better eating habits.
- will have more energy to help them in school, at home, and life in general.

Again, the Pilate program will be low-cost implement, easy to use, and offers tremendous paybacks for the individual and society as a whole. It will without any doubt result in decreasing the number people that will suffer with diabetes and other excess weight related, *preventable* diseases. Therefore, it will absolutely reduce our nation's short and long-term healthcare costs, as well.

Parents Could Make it Start this School Year

The implementation of this beneficial fitness program in our public schools could begin as soon as the parents in each school decide to make it happen. Parents and school administrators could meet during this school year to plan how and how soon to begin incorporating the Pilate exercise program into their school's regular physical education program.

A very practical answer for our kids, and us too!