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PROJECT ADVENTURE LAUNCHES NATION'S FIRST ADVENTURE CURRICULUM FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION Innovative New Program Takes Aim at Childhood Obesity

Beverly, Mass. (January 12, 2005) -- Designed to combat the rising problem of childhood obesity, Project Adventure, Inc. <www.pa.org> announced recently the launch of the nation's first *Adventure Curriculum for Physical Education* for elementary, middle, and high schools. With the increasing popularity of video games and television threatening to monopolize children's free time, the curricula provides a fresh approach to physical education, offering educators new, innovative tools and activities which provide students with "aha" experiences, discovering how powerful they are in the world, and how to enjoy being physically active.

"Inactivity is robbing our children of fundamental development needed to become healthy, confident people," said Jane Panicucci, COO. "By rethinking the way children engage physical activity, this curriculum can have profound affects that transcend health benefits and get to the core of positive behavioral learning."

The Department of Health and Human Services reports that 9 million children are either obese or overweight, putting them at risk to cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. The CDC reported last month that obesity may soon overtake smoking as the top cause of preventable death in the U.S. Lack of physical exercise and poor diet accounted for 400,000 deaths in 2000, second only to smoking.

Adventure-Based Activity and Learning

In New York State, where the program was implemented in 2003, the director of Physical Education, Health and Wellness reports a higher level of interest and engagement in Physical Education participation. In addition, skills learned through the Project Adventure trainings have been transferred to other areas of the curriculum. Educators outside the Physical Education department are seeing the added value and positive effect of the PE program on student behavior and attitude, and feedback from parents and community members has been strong.

The curricula format and outcomes are aligned with national and state Physical Education standards. Implementation is made simple with clearly explained lesson plans comprised of activities designed to develop social competency, conflict resolution skills, leadership ability, and problem solving skills. Lessons include specific outcomes, briefing suggestions, rules and reflection questions, as well as assessment tools. The curricula are designed as supplements to Physical Education programs or as curricula for Out of School Time programs. The curriculum helps educators integrate and implement all or part of a K-12 Adventure component into an existing physical education program.

“Since our district incorporated Project Adventure four years ago, we have seen a tremendous increase in cooperative skills, teamwork, patience, acceptance, and trust. PA not only develops a variety of social skills, but enhances every aspect of our physical education program” says Donna Moore, a teacher at Safford Unified Schools, Safford, Arizona.

Curricula 30 Years in the Making

Since the 1970s, Project Adventure has stuck to its simple goal: “to bring the adventure home.” Since then, more than 2,500 Project Adventure school-based physical education programs have been adopted globally.

PA’s founders, former Outward Bound instructors, had experience in leading wilderness adventure trips. Their goal was to make Adventure accessible to people of all abilities and adaptable to many different time frames. Struck by the power of Adventure, they developed a program that could be done in a gymnasium or on a playground field. They understood that it is more about doing and less about where and what one does. A class becomes an adventure for students if an element of surprise exists; if activities compel them into doing things they never imagined possible. Adventure exists where there is engagement and includes challenge, moments where students are on the brink of both success and failure. Adventure is about taking risks, both physical and emotional.

In his review of the *Adventure Curriculum for Physical Education: Middle School*, Billy O’Steen writes “This approach to physical education through activities that seek to build community, increased self-awareness, and teach transferable interpersonal skills is especially critical for young adolescents attempting to find meaning in a society that may appear to be fractured, daunting, and impersonal.”

The mission of Project Adventure, an innovative teaching organization, is to provide leadership in the expansion of Adventure-based experiential programming. Project Adventure seeks to develop responsible individuals, productive organizations and sustainable communities.

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