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## Health-obesity study at Mayfair Elementary School in East Cleveland uses dance as exercise

 Posted by [Jennifer Gonzalez/Plain Dealer Reporter](#) November 18, 2008 07:51AM

 Categories: [Education](#), [Health](#)


Lisa DeJong/The Plain Dealer

Students from Mayfair Elementary School in East Cleveland dance Monday, using an interactive exercise mat and video software program. The youngsters are taking part in a research study led by a Case Western Reserve University nursing professor.

**EAST CLEVELAND** – Students at Mayfair Elementary School are dancing their way to better health.

Hip-hop. Salsa. Rock 'n' roll. They kick off their shoes and move to the beat every morning in the school's gym.

"Exercising is healthy," said Bryanne Coleman, 9, little beads of sweat popping on the bridge of her nose. "It keeps you strong."

Bryanne is one of about 20 students in grades two through six participating in a school-year-long study led by Peg Heinzer, associate professor of nursing at Case Western Reserve University.

The Dance Pad Exercise for a Healthy Weight in Childhood is investigating whether increasing exercise alone can make a difference in a student's body mass index – a way to estimate a healthy body weight based on a person's height.

The research project is funded by the Midwest Nursing Research Society.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children should have an hour of vigorous exercise daily. Heinzer said dancing is a good way for children to lose weight and have fun.

Since late September, the students have arrived at school every day about an hour before classes start to exercise. For 20 minutes, they follow dance steps on a television screen and match them on a large dance pad.

For Chardonny Savage, 11, the morning exercise routine is in addition to her own workout – the all-star workouts on FitTV. She decided to participate in the study because it looked like fun and she wanted to lose weight.

"You don't realize that you are losing weight because you are dancing," she said.

Nim Bryant, Mayfair's physical-education teacher, said students, who often have sedentary lifestyles, need to learn that exercising should be a lifelong activity.

Heinzer's research centers on children who are at risk for obesity in adulthood. Students in the research project are between the ages of 8 and 11 and found to be in the 95th percentile or higher for their weight and age.

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That places them at risk as adults for a number of health problems ranging from cardiovascular disease to type 2 diabetes, Heinzer said.

The study at Mayfair builds on work begun in a 2006 pilot in the Cleveland School District. Heinzer found that participating students improved their physical coordination and focused better in the classroom. Students also had lower suspension rates than nondancing students.

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Posted by **dkeene** on [11/18/08 at 9:38AM](#)

perhaps their mummies should get them off of the dollar menu

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