

---

## China turns to the U.S. for help with overweight kids

By Jeannine Stein

Think America is the only country having trouble getting its young people to exercise? Think again. A similar scenario is happening in China, where young people are increasingly becoming overweight and obese.

The Chinese government would like to do something about it, so it turned to the U.S. for some help.

More specifically, it turned to Indiana University and its School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, which is hosting a meeting next month to come up with a plan to implement "Sunny Sports China," China President Hu Jintao's plan to incorporate daily activity in China's schools, affecting about 270 million schoolchildren.

This isn't the first time the university and China have worked together -- Lloyd Kolbe, the School of HPER's associate dean for global and community health, has a long history of working with the country on various health projects, and two years ago was invited to lend input on the Sunny Sports project.

"The rate of obesity and overweight in China, especially in the economically well off provinces, has been increasing dramatically," says Kolbe, who chalks up the change to several factors: more fast food restaurants, more television watching, and additional sedentary time spent studying, as more students enter universities.

What China is interested in, he adds, is what physical education experts in this country have been working on for years -- devising P.E. programs that allow kids to move continuously, are inexpensive, fun, and build teamwork and character. Of course, those efforts have also been hampered by severe budget cuts and an emphasis on test scores, which have pushed P.E. to a back burner in many states.

But the Chinese want to bring it forward. "They want to create programs that keep young people moving," he says, "and develop the kinds of physical activity patterns and skills that will allow them to maintain a lifelong pattern of activity." Once the programs (which are not yet developed) are in place, Kolbe says, studies will be conducted to see what effects the programs have. The meeting next month will also include representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and national physical fitness and education organizations.

He's optimistic about the prospects: "As we increasingly live in a globalized world," he says, "I hope nations can learn from each other and figure out how to improve the health of children, no matter what nation they live in."



**International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association**  
To Grow, Protect and Promote the Industry.

This article brought to you by IHRSA and Technogym - IHRSA · 263 Summer Street · Boston · MA · 02210