

Title of Intervention and Website: The Verb Campaign

<http://www.cdc.gov/YouthCampaign/>

Intervention Strategies: Campaigns and Promotions

Purpose of the Intervention: To increase and maintain physical activity among tweens

Population: Children aged 9 to 13 years (“tweens”) from across the nation and their parents/teachers/guardians

Setting: U.S. (nationwide); school-based, community-based

Partners: CDC, media networks, magazine distributors, professional sports leagues, community organizations, schools, government

Intervention Description:

- Campaigns and Promotions: Commercials aired on age-appropriate television and radio channels such as Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, The WB, ABC Saturday Morning Disney, Disney Radio, Telemundo and BET. Print advertising was placed in youth publications such as *Sports Illustrated for Kids*, *TIME for Kids*, *Teen People* and *Seventeen* and in parent publications such as *Family Circle*, *Parent Magazine*, *Ebony*, and *Indian Country Today*. Spanish and Asian in-language advertising and advertorials appear in publications such as *Korea Times*, *World Journal*, and *Los Padres*. The campaign negotiated added-value opportunities for media partners (e.g., PSAs using television talent and properties; VERB sponsorships of popular kids’ events). Several times a year, the campaign featured community-based promotions such as: “Longest Day of Play” and “Extra Hour for Extra Action” for which schools and organization were eligible to apply for mini grants to support physical activity. The campaign distributed custom materials to schools (e.g., book covers, day planners, lesson plans) and utilized school-based media (e.g., *Weekly Reader*, *Channel One*). The campaign participated in existing community and cultural events by hosting “active zones” for trying out new activities. Street teams (i.e., 5-8 college age men and women) created buzz about the campaign, engaged tweens in physical activity and distributed promotional items. Media partners sponsored contests and sweepstakes. Websites were created for tweens, for parents and for partners and stakeholders.

Theory: Social marketing theory; Social cognitive theory; Theory of planned behavior

Resources Required:

- Staff/Volunteers: street team members, advertising agencies, website designers, graphic designers
- Training: not mentioned
- Technology: television/radio/print advertising creation
- Space: media time and space
- Budget: cost of advertising time, cost of promotions, cost of materials
- Intervention: paid advertising time, promotions,
- Evaluation: survey, phone, random-digit-dialing capability, computer assisted telephone interviewing technology

Evaluation:

- Design: quasi-experimental
- Methods and Measures:
 - Children: survey measuring participation in, attitudes toward, beliefs about physical activity and awareness of VERB. Seven-day physical activity recall.
 - Parents: survey measuring attitudes and beliefs about physical activity for children, participation in physical activity with their children, confidence in influencing their children’s involvement in physical activity and awareness of VERB.

Outcomes:

- Short term Impact: After 1 year of advertising, the VERB campaign was successful in achieving high levels of awareness and understanding.
- Long Term Impact: After 1 year of advertising, the VERB campaign was successful in affecting free-time physical activity for subgroups of children 9 to 13 years of age. The campaign narrowed the gap in physical activity between girls and boys. Lower income tweens were more physically active.

Maintenance: In the first year of the campaign, local partnerships were developed in nine cities that received extra marketing activities. Later, organizations across the country were recruited to become site partners or outreach partners. The campaign also sought partnerships with corporations to extend the reach and appeal (e.g., pro sports teams).

Lessons Learned: Multi-pronged approaches, including more physical education in schools, programs that address transportation and other barriers to being active, and public and private efforts to increase access to safe places for children to be active, are still required to increase and to maintain the number of US children participating in regular physical activity. Leveraging the purchased media time to garner substantial added-value support from media partners gave opportunities to surround children in more ways, such as in schools and at promotional events.

Citation(s):

Wong, F., M. Huhman, et al. (2004). "VERB™ — a social marketing campaign to increase physical activity among youth." *Preventing Chronic Disease*.

Huhman, M., C. Heitzler, et al. (2004). "The Verb campaign logic model: a tool for planning and evaluation." *Preventing Chronic Disease* 1(3): 1-6.

Huhman M, Potter LC, Wong FL, Banspach SW, Duke JC, Heitzler CD. (2005). Effects of a Mass Media Campaign to Increase Physical Activity Among Children: Year-1 Results of the VERB Campaign. *Pediatrics* 116(2):277-284.