Fat Chance: Child Obesity
TEACHER'S GUIDE

What teachers need to know:
Experts say the number of children who are overweight and obese has reached epidemic proportions. And 75% of *adolescents* who are obese grow up to be overweight *adults*. Is it the combination of too much TV viewing, video games, poor nutrition choices and lack of physical activity that is putting today's young people at risk?

Being overweight or obese can cause serious physical and emotional problems, including poor self-esteem; depression; hip and joint problems; early puberty; breathing problems. Today, more children than ever before are suffering from *adult* health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease and adult diabetes.

Lesson Plan
Objectives:
Students will:

- Research healthy nutrition
- Understand how "My Pyramid" works
- Calculate the caloric amount and fat percentage of their daily diets

Materials:

- Paper and writing implements
- Access to the Internet and other research materials
- Food packages (at least one for every two students) with nutrition labels.

Project and Purpose:
In this lesson, students will understand and calculate the calories and fats in what they eat, and determine how healthy their lifestyle is.

1. Divide the class into pairs. Using the websites listed below, each pair will gather information on the caloric and fat requirements for someone their age and weight. Students should find the following information:
   - Recommended calorie intake for a person their age
   - Differences between male and female calorie recommendations
   - Other distinctions for calorie intake
   - Food groups and what makes a balanced diet
   - How to calculate fat intake and serving sizes
   - Physical activity recommendations
2. Have students record their findings; at the end of the assigned research time, have them share their findings in a class discussion.
3. Distribute one package of food to each pair and have students examine the nutritional facts on the label. According to their research, is this a healthy food? Why or why not? Is this a food they would eat?
4. For homework, have students record on paper everything they eat during the next 24 hours. This should include drinks, snacks, gum, or even bites of someone else's food.
5. On the due date, have students review their 24-hour food intake lists and compare their eating habits with their research partner's. Using their earlier research, how do their eating habits measure up? Are they eating according to the recommendations for a healthy lifestyle? Did they include the water they drank (if any)? Did they balance their caloric intake with physical activity?

Suggested research websites: www.mypyramid.gov, www.kidshealth.org, www.stayinginshape.com, www.eatright.org, www.bam.gov/fit4life.com

Class Discussion Questions:

1. What is the meaning of "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" or "Beauty is only skin-deep?" How do these quotes relate to obesity?
2. Why do you think more children today are overweight? Is it based on a person's choices? Unhealthy lifestyles promoted in the media? What other factors have had an impact on this epidemic?
3. Several people have sued fast food chains, blaming them for their children's obesity. Do you think this is justified or not? Explain your answer.

Self-Reflection Questions:

(Students can answer anonymously on paper on in journals)

1. Different cultures have different definitions of "attractive." What is your definition of "beauty" based on? Does knowing where your definitions came from make you want to change your opinions about beauty?
2. Do you consider yourself beautiful/handsome? Why or why not?
3. Which do you think is worse for obese individuals: the physical effects (diabetes, heart disease, etc.) or the emotional ones (low self-esteem, depression)? Why? Which would be worse for you?

Evaluation:

- Did all students produce research?
- Can students read a nutrition label to find necessary information?
- Did students participate in group activities and class discussions?