



Bluearth Foundation

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Big classes at risk of getting bigger

New research highlights a solution at our fingertips to the growing problem of overweight and obesity of our children. Currently 25.3 %ⁱ of our children are overweight or obese. On current trends, this looks likely to grow to a third of children by 2025ⁱⁱ.

"Schools are often saddled with being the solution to all issues. But here we have an opportunity to deliver proven results in class within existing curriculum" said Wendy Gillett, CEO of the Bluearth Foundation.

New results from the longitudinal Lifestyle Of Our Kids (LOOK) study just published in the US Public Library of Science journal PLOS ONE last weekend demonstrates the importance of specialist physical education instruction as a preventative health measure. The study, led by Professor Dick Telford, from the University of Canberra and Canberra Hospital Clinical Trials Unit, was conducted over four years of primary school in a cohort of about 750 children. Approximately half of the children had specialised PE provided by the Bluearth Foundation; the other half being the common current practice of PE being provided by the generalist classroom teacher. Children who received the specialist PE entered secondary school with lower incidence of at-risk cholesterol levels. Coupled with previous findings in the same study that specialist PE reduces insulin resistance and percent body fat strong evidence is mounting for increased attention to PE in primary schools as a preventive health measure.

There is mandated time for physical education in most states and territories, however this is usually taught by generalist classroom teachers, with little training or background in physical education. An audit done by the Audit Office of NSW, showed that despite having mandatory requirements in place, many schools are not meeting the requirements.

This latest research shows the opportunity cost of expecting generalist classroom teachers to deliver specialist physical education results.

Bluearth Foundation has been working as a cost effective solution for over a decade, working with Principals and teachers to make a difference and deliver results.

"We can't expect teachers to do it on their own," Gillett said. "Urgent action is needed to ensure all Australian children benefit from specialist physical education."

Media Enquiries - Professor Telford is available for comment and interview

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ⁱ Australian National Health Survey 2011-2012

ⁱⁱ Future Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity in Australian Children and Adolescents, 2005 -2025, DHS Vic

The Bluearth Foundation is a national not-for-profit organisation whose focus is to improve health and prevent diseases by increasing the levels of physical activity amongst Australians, in particular school age children.

Donations of \$2 or more are fully tax deductible.