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AE/MS Jumps Rope For Healthy Hearts (And Fun!)

By Mike Silverstein
AE/MS Physical Education Teacher

Anybody who has been around AE/MS during recess time knows that jump roping has really taken off lately. Students have been begging for more ropes at recess.

The students were probably influenced by Jump Rope For Heart fundraisers going on throughout the state. The American Heart Association teams up with physical education teachers throughout the country to help promote jumping rope (because it's healthy for the heart) and to raise money for heart disease and stroke. Heart disease and stroke are the number one and number three causes of death.

I had been planning Jump Rope For Heart Week for a few months now. The interest in jumping began to really grow before I was ready to teach and promote it. Other teachers noticed the interest and began to help it along. Mr. Wiley and Ms. Slayton ordered more ropes and a jump rope video to help the kids learn.

I used this video to learn more about jumping myself, so I could demonstrate many tricks for the students to learn. The video also had some awesome demonstrations to inspire everybody to practice jumping.

Immediately after I showed the video and began teaching the tricks, jumping at AE/MS exploded! When we began, probably two to five students could do Double Dutch jumping. Now many students are Double Dutch jumping.

The next step for these jumpers is to learn tricks to add to their Double Dutch jumping. Some of the students are already working on it. Some of the older kids can get up to three jumpers Double Dutch jumping at the same time.

Other tricks such as push-up type jumping and footwork moves are already being performed by a select few. Some students did not focus on the Double Dutch, but on single jump rope moves or long rope jumping.

Countless students have showed me their new tricks or how much they have improved their jump roping. Many students who thought they could not jump at all realized with some practice and effort they, too, can jump.

Not only that, I have also seen many students getting an excellent workout from jumping rope (or trying to jump rope). Even though students only jump a minute at a time, the minutes really begin to add up.

So what did we do during Jump Rope For Heart Week? All Physical Education classes did jump roping the entire period. We did single rope jumping, long rope jumping, and Double Dutch. We also talked about the things that cause heart disease and stroke.

Most importantly, we learned about the things we can do to prevent heart disease and stroke. We need to eat right (lots of fruits and veggies, and not a lot of fatty meats), exercise often, and do not smoke.

We also learned that heart disease can affect anybody, and that it has affected most of our lives in some way or another. Students and staff filled out hearts to hang on the wall of our gym to show all the people that have been affected by heart disease and stroke in our school community. We have about 60 or 70 hearts hanging on our wall, and that is only a part of the true number.

These hearts are for friends and relatives of our school community who have passed away because of heart disease or stroke and for survivors of these diseases. Students became aware that having checkups on a regular basis can save your life, as the story of some of the hearts on the wall told.

The week ended with Jump Rope For Heart Day. During this day, students were brought to the gym to jump rope together, to reinforce the importance of regular exercise, eating right, and not smoking, and to watch a few clips of the movie *Jump In.* This is a Disney movie about Double Dutch jump roping. Even though it was chaotic, the students did really well and it was a lot of fun.

Many students have approached me about the possibility of starting a jump rope team. I'm considering this possibility, so if you are interested keep your eyes and ears open.

In many respects, Jump Rope For Heart was a great success. In one respect, it was not very successful at all. The letter sent home asking for donations received only five donations, raising a total of $45. That's actually a very good amount for only five donations, but I was hoping most everybody would give two or three dollars, helping to reach a $1,000 goal for the school.

So the door is still open to donate. Make checks payable to the American Heart Association and give the check to the school office or to me.

Keep on jumping. It's good for the heart and the soul.

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