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Obesity causes lower academic performances for American youth  
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## Obesity Causes Lower Academic Performances for America's Youth

### *A fit mind in a sound body*

An increasing number of scientists argue that the poor academic performances the US youth has been registering over the past few years, which prompted the creation of the No Child Left Behind Act, are also tightly linked to the abnormally high levels of obesity among children aged 6 to 11. Scientists believe that fitness exercises are the key to reversing this issue, saying that, by engaging in sportive activities, the kids' brains receive numerous good chemical impulses, which trigger the production of various hormones, necessary for a good learning process.

The latest TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) results, compiled for 2007 and released just last month, show that the United States are currently placed just at the middle of the international charts, which centralize data gathered from dozens of countries. Among the pieces of information that are taken into account in creating the TIMSS test results are the grades that students from the 4th and 8th grade get in their schools, in various objects, including math, physics, and science.

For 2007, some 425,000 students participated in the statistics program, answering questions regarding algebra, geometry, chemistry and physics. A worrying number says that only 6 percent of the American youth reached the "advanced" level in math, as opposed to 45 percent of kids in Chinese Taipei, and 40 percent in Korea and Singapore. In all objects, the US team came at the middle of the charts, surpassed easily by Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore.

In regard to the physical health of the participants, children from all other countries proved to be, on average, healthier than Americans, especially in matters related to weight and body/mass index. According to some numbers released by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the number of obese teenagers in the country has tripled, that is, it has increased by 300 percent, since 1980. Currently, more than 125 million children in America have health problems related to excessive weight.

"I cannot underestimate how important regular exercise is in improving the function and performance of the brain. Exercise stimulates our gray matter to produce Miracle-Gro for the brain. Dopamine, serotonin, norepinephrine - all of these are elevated after exercise. So having a workout will help focus, calming down, and impulsiveness - it's like taking a little bit of Prozac and a little bit of Ritalin," says Harvard clinical associate professor of psychiatry, John Ratey.