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Physical Education instructor launches experimental program to boost student academic success

Story by [Alexa Bazua](#)

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Physical Education instructor Deborah Jensen is starting a new, volunteer-based experimental program titled, the "PE Pilot Program."

Jensen was inspired to start this program at Cerritos College while at a conference that featured John Ratey, an associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

Ratey is the founder of Spark, a program that stresses the importance of exercise to improve brain function.

His idea is that exercising right before a class improves your academic abilities in that subject, whether it be math or reading.

Jensen is taking the same approach with this experiment.

Volunteers for the experiment will be placed into three groups: one will have PE pilot and an academic class back to back, another will have PE pilot and an academic class at any time, and the last will have no PE and an academic class.

The goal of the experiment is to find that the group taking the PE and academic class back to back will have improved in that specific class, and the group not taking PE will have no significant improvement at all.

Many schools all over the country, from elementary to high school, have already incorporated this program into their curriculum and have seen great success with their students because this program has already benefited so many schools, coach Jensen wants to bring this program to the community college level.

Jensen also explained the scientific aspect of this program.

"Picture your brain having one hose, and mine having four. My brain will fill up a bucket with water faster than yours will," she said.

The example with hoses is to describe how someone who exercises before studying or attending an academic class will have more neurochemicals released from the brain, improving brain function, and ultimately improving their abilities in that academic subject.

Besides exercise helping your grades, "It also helps to keep your stress levels down," Jensen said.

"Anyone can benefit from this program," Jensen said in regard to who would qualify for the program.

The volunteers will be required to fill out various surveys about their exercising, take a pre-test and post-test for math and English, as well as attend meetings to track their progress.

At the end of this year-long experiment, if the volunteers indeed do show significant academic improvement, increased fitness levels, and improved self-esteem, this could welcome a new program to the school's Physical Education department.

Jensen has high hopes that this experiment will turn out successful, and that the participating volunteers will "gain a higher level of personal insight regarding their self-confidence, discipline, and focus centered on success."

Students who are interested in being a volunteer for the PE pilot program can contact Jensen at djensen@cerritos.edu or [\(562\) 860-2451 ext. 2867](tel:(562)860-2451).

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