

About *Rev It Up!*

Rev It Up! is a nutrition and physical activity education curriculum developed by Rutgers Cooperative Extension for low-income, high school-aged adolescents (grades 9-12). Developed for use with the New Jersey Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), the curriculum has been designed to be implemented in 10 lessons by paraprofessional educators, i.e., those with no formal college-level training in nutrition education.

The *Rev It Up!* curriculum has several core guiding principles in its design:

1. **Gamification:** Concepts are introduced and reinforced by games and activities. Many of the games are based on popular TV shows (like Family Feud® and Jeopardy®) or themes that are exciting to teens (like being secret agents and participating in the Olympic games).
2. **Active Learning:** Teens become active participants in their learning by participating in both the games and in the *Walk Indoors!* video series developed by Rutgers Cooperative Extension. *Walk Indoors!* is available for free online at <https://efnep.rutgers.edu/Exercisevideos.html>. Physical DVDs are also available for purchase by contacting Dr. Debra Palmer-Keenan at dkeenan@njaes.rutgers.edu.
3. **Practical Solutions:** We understand that high schoolers are gaining autonomy and making more food decisions at this life stage, yet there are still many food decisions outside of their control at home and school. *Rev It Up!* focuses on occasions where teens have the most control over nutrition and physical activity behaviors, i.e., when choosing snacks, beverages, fast food, and when and how to be more active.
4. **Collaborating with School Partners:** *Rev It Up!* is best implemented as a supplement to high school health, physical education, or family and consumer sciences classes with up to 30 students. We have found that *Rev It Up!* works better in classrooms than in settings outside of school, where teens would rather socialize with friends than do structured activities. To fit *Rev It Up!* within short high school periods, each lesson is designed to be taught in about 35 minutes.

Our Experience and Teaching Philosophy

Rev It Up!'s design is heavily influenced by our staffs' experiences with adolescents, from our paraprofessionals who have taught in low-income high schools across New Jersey, all the way up to Dr. Debra Palmer-Keenan, who was formerly a high school science teacher in Cincinnati, Ohio. High school-aged adolescents' learning styles differ from adults and youth in that they:

- Can be difficult to motivate
- Need to understand the practical applications of material ("When am I going to use this in real life?")
- Learn by challenging authority (which occasionally makes them appear to be defiant or confrontational)

- Are often more influenced by peers than by adults and authority figures
- Have difficulty keeping track of time and often lose their focus

Because of these audience characteristics, paraprofessionals often struggle with working with teens. Thus, *Rev It Up!* lesson plans are written to highlight potential challenges we have found educators may face, and to suggest how they can be overcoming in a positive, encouraging way. This is not meant to discourage paraprofessionals – in fact, we have found in our pilot tests that when the tips we’ve provided are employed, most teens are excited and engaged during *Rev It Up!* lessons. However, we have found in trainings and site visits that paraprofessionals need specific instruction in how to deal with challenges in the classroom. We plan to have a detailed implementer’s guide to highlight some of the main considerations that should be included in a training for paraprofessionals who will be teaching adolescents. However, it is important to consider that some paraprofessionals may never be completely comfortable working with teens. As with any curriculum, we suggest playing to your team’s strengths, and choosing which educators will be best suited to carry out *Rev It Up!*

***Rev It Up!* Lessons**

1. **Can’t Stop Me Now!** Teens learn about moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) and that they need 60 minutes of MVPA each day. They work in teams to think of what makes it hard for teens, like themselves, to be more active. Finally, they are introduced to the *Walk Indoors!* video series, which is promoted as a solution to many of the common physical activity barriers teens often state. This lesson also allows time for a program evaluation survey.
2. **MyPlate Family Feud®** Teens are provided with information on MyPlate and the 5 food groups (for many, this is a review). To reinforce knowledge and discover healthy foods from each of the food groups, teens play a game based on the popular TV show *Family Feud®*. One hundred actual nutritionists were asked about the foods they most often eat from each food group, and the teens must figure out the most popular answers. Teens also receive samples of homemade flavored popcorn and are offered copies of the recipe(s) to take home.
3. **Drink for Your Health!** Teens are split into teams and play a game to guess how many packets of sugar are in sugary beverages they commonly drink. The teens are usually shocked at how much sugar they drink just from one beverage. Teens get to try a sample of homemade iced tea and are offered a recipe to take home. They also learn about “better” lower-sugar and sugar-free drinks. The lesson closes with another *Walk Indoors!* segment that adds arm movements to their walk.
4. **Fast Food Jeopardy®** Teens play a special version of the classic *Jeopardy®* game. They play for “Calorie Points,” based on the actual calorie amounts of menu items from some popular fast-food restaurants. The teens learn to choose fast food items with less sugar, less fat, and more food groups. They also learn how to use the calorie labels on menu boards as a guide to make better choices when choosing to eat out.

5. **Supermarket Sweep® for Sustainability** Teens learn about sustainability and receive 3 tips for making more sustainable choices when shopping for food. To reinforce what they learn, the teens play a version of the popular *Supermarket Sweep®* game where they must choose sustainable foods for their shopping list to earn the fewest number of carbon footprints (and thus, the most sustainable basket). Then, teens learn how to add weights to the *Walk Indoors!* routine to strengthen their muscles.
6. **Veg Out!** After learning about how food choices impact the planet, teens are more willing to try veggie snacks instead of some of the less healthy snacks they normally eat. To learn about the nutrient density of veggie snacks, teens play a game where they guess how much of a veggie snack they would have to eat to get the same number of calories as a less healthy snack (e.g., “How many baby carrots would you have to eat to equal the same number of calories as this bag of chips?”). Silly pictures, like a backpack full of celery sticks, accompany the shocking answers. The teens learn that they can fill up on veggie snacks for fewer calories and more nutrients than the less healthy snacks. Then, the teens learn how to do interval training with *Walk Indoors!*
7. **Take Control of Your Portions!** Teens learn about how portion sizes have changed tremendously since their parents or grandparents were their age. Then, they work in teams to figure out how they can take a series of culturally diverse meals they may normally eat and find creative ways to reduce the portions or increase the healthfulness (e.g., saving half the plate for later, swapping a starch for a veggie side), using the make-believe app “PlateTune.” Afterwards the teens add more intensity to their MVPA with *Walk Indoors!*
8. **Wash Up and Cook Safe!** In this lesson, teens learn how to properly wash their hands using a germ powder demonstration from the educator. Then, the teens work together, as the educator does a mock cooking demonstration with food models, to determine what food storage and cooking practices are safe, and which are not. Teens learn useful information, such as how long ready-to-eat food can be left out; and whether expiration dates, best by dates, and use by dates are all the same or not.
9. **Snack Attack!** Teens work in teams as Special Agents for the Rev It Up! Teen Bureau to help teens across the nation who are experiencing snack attacks – i.e., sudden cravings for something to eat between meals! Using the food cards in their “case folders,” teens must decide which healthy snacks meet specific snack needs (e.g., something crunchy, something high in protein, something that can be kept in a locker all day). Afterward, the teens learn that dancing can count as MVPA too! The educator encourages them to get out of their chairs and do a line dance together, like the Cupid Shuffle.
10. **Rev It Up! at the Olympics** In the final lesson, teens learn more about muscle-strengthening exercise (strength training) and they compete in teams as countries (real or make-believe) that are participating in the Rev It Up! Olympics. Teens learn each of the 6 events, which are all exercises to strengthen muscles (some using fitness bands brought in by the educator). Then, the teams compete in the Rev It Up! Olympics. The competitors with the best form and

sportsmanship win the Rev It Up! Gold Medals! This lesson allows time for a program evaluation survey.

Rev It Up! Materials

Rev It Up! can be implemented at minimal cost to your program. In fact, you may find that many of the materials used in *Rev It Up!* are things you already have (i.e., empty beverage containers for sugar demonstrations, food models). All presentations and game materials are available for view and download, free of charge, from the NJ EFNEP website: <http://www.efnephelps.org/revitup>. The materials are continually being updated as we are still in formative evaluation and piloting, so check back often for updates.

Rev It Up! Online

Each lesson plan has an addendum with instructions on how to adapt the lesson for administration over a web conferencing software, like Zoom. The lessons are very similar to the in-person version. We recommend that *Rev It Up! Online* be administered by two paraprofessionals: one to teach the class, and one to operate the online controls, such as screen sharing and breakout rooms.

Research of Rev It Up!

Rev It Up! has undergone several rounds of pilot testing since its initial development in 2015. Currently, we are working on finishing qualitative research with participants of these pilot rounds. We plan to conduct an impact evaluation of *Rev It Up!* during Federal Fiscal Year 2022 (October 2021 – September 2022).

Geb Bastian, one of the curriculum designers and evaluators, presented an oral abstract presentation about *Rev It Up!* at the 2020 Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior meeting. You can read the abstract at [https://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046\(20\)30210-4/pdf](https://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046(20)30210-4/pdf) and access the recorded presentation at www.sneb.org.

Rev It Up! Pricing

We plan to make the *Rev It Up!* curriculum available to other programs soon! Please contact Dr. Debra Palmer-Keenan at dkeenan@njaes.rutgers.edu for more information.