

Partner Guide



In Alliance with the American College
of Cardiology

SCIENTIFICALLY EVALUATED HEALTH
EDUCATION - AGES 4-7



AMERICAN
COLLEGE of
CARDIOLOGY



A letter by DR. VALENTÍN FUSTER



Dear Community Leaders, Educators, and Families,

It is a privilege to address you as you take on the vital task of promoting healthy habits among young children. What you do is not only important, it is transformative, and the science leaves no doubt about this.

Across the world, cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death, and much of it can be prevented. Over five decades of research have brought me to a simple but powerful conviction: prevention must begin in childhood. The habits children form in their earliest years (how they eat, how they move, how they understand and manage their emotions) shape the health of their hearts for the rest of their lives. Correcting an unhealthy trajectory later is possible, but it is never as effective as building a healthy one from the start.

This is the foundation of the "Fuster and Friends" program. It reflects what we have learned from more than fifteen years of rigorous, randomized research with children in Colombia, Spain, and the United States. Our programs have reached thousands of children and repeatedly demonstrated that young children can learn, remember, and act on health messages when those messages are delivered in ways that are joyful, culturally resonant, and connected to their families and communities.

When children learn about their bodies (how the heart beats, how the lungs breathe, how movement energizes them) they are not simply acquiring knowledge; they are developing awareness, curiosity, and a sense of responsibility for their own well-being. When they understand the basics of nutrition, the importance of physical activity, and emotions together, as a whole, they begin building habits that can last a lifetime. And when these messages are combined with attractive, engaging, and emotional elements, they stick and become much more ingrained. And when a child goes home and tells their family what they learned, that conversation becomes a seed of change in the household and eventually, in the community.

Our research has shown consistently that the most powerful outcomes occur when we engage children, families, schools, and communities together. No single element is sufficient on its own. You (as community agents, educators, and trusted adults) are the bridge between knowledge and action. Children learn by watching the people they love and respect. Your role in modeling, encouraging, and reinforcing healthy habits cannot be overstated.

As you begin this work, I ask you to hold three principles close:



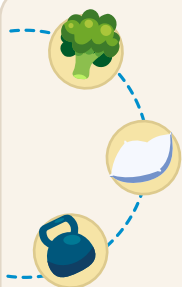
1. Start early.

The earlier we reach children, the deeper and more lasting the impact. Ages four to seven represent a critical developmental window – children this age are forming the habits and beliefs that will carry them through adolescence and into adulthood.



2. Engage the whole environment.

Children do not learn in isolation. The greatest changes occur when families, teachers, schools, and communities all reinforce the same messages. Invite families into this work whenever you can. Their participation multiplies the impact of everything you do in the classroom or health setting.



3. Focus on habits, not just information.

Knowledge is the beginning, not the destination. What children do every day – choosing water, moving their bodies, recognizing and naming their emotions, marveling at how their hearts work – matters far more than what they are simply told. Our goal is not an informed child, but a child whose daily life is already a little healthier.

Remember that small actions, practiced consistently, compound over time. A child who chooses water over a sugary drink, who runs outside instead of sitting still, who knows how to take a breath when they are angry (that child is already on a different health trajectory than they might otherwise have been). These are not small things. They are, quietly, the most important things.

The "Fuster and Friends" program exists because I believe that health is not a privilege; it is a right that must be cultivated from the very beginning of life. You are the ones doing that, cultivating. You are not only teaching children; you are helping to build healthier generations.

With my deepest respect and encouragement,

Dr. Valentín Fuster

President, Mount Sinai Fuster Heart Hospital

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York

Program Overview

**Duration:**

Variable depending on setting (4 to 16 weeks).

**Audience:**

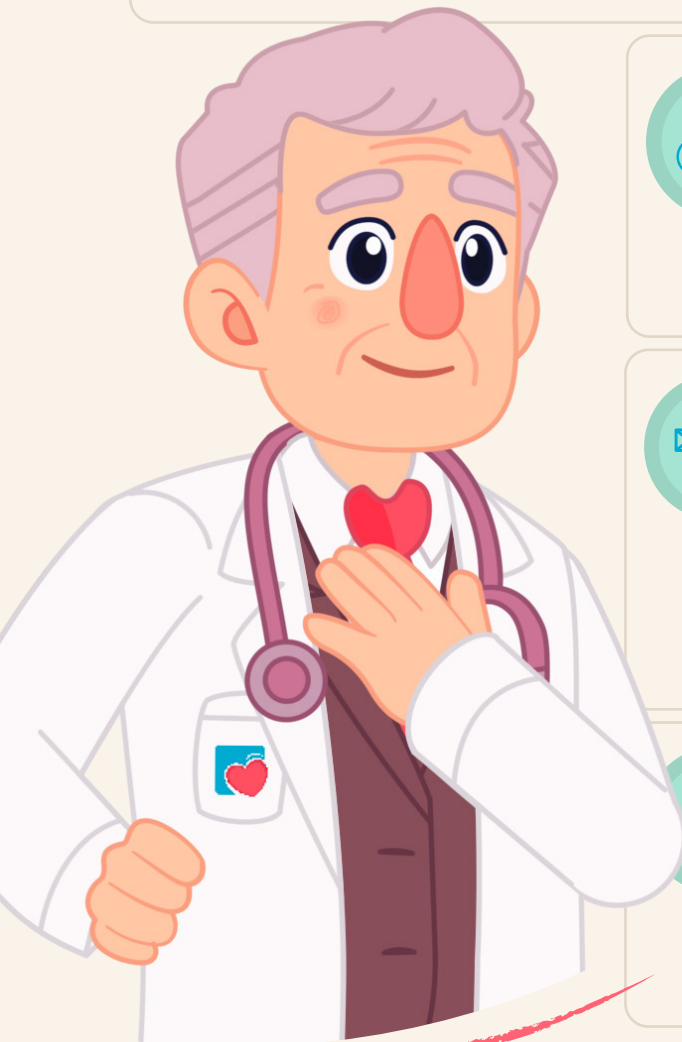
Children ages 4-7.

**Settings:**

Schools, community centers, hospital waiting rooms & consultation offices, family settings.

**Curriculum:**

Divided into four interconnected domains: Understanding How the Body and the Heart Function, Adoption of Healthy Eating Habits, Promotion of Physical Activity, and Emotional Regulation.

**Pedagogic approach:**

Dr. Fuster and Friends is a transmedia experience which seeks to promote healthy lifestyle habits through play, exploration and active participation.



Multimedia materials including animated series, documentaries, games and digital books for children. Community guide and promotional materials for adults. Materials for families including a weekly challenge, recipe book, emotions portfolio, movement challenge and a body knowledge board game.

**Protocol:**

Each week follows a clear structure, with activities that move from energizing games to guided lessons, creative exploration, and reflection.

Educational Goals

Dr. Fuster and Friends has at its core four basic competencies that holistically address the child, helping them gain the knowledge, attitudes, and habits related to healthy behaviors. As it is oriented to young children, the project's Educational Framework presents age-appropriate competencies that are seen as requisite to nurturing children's health and development:

1. Understanding how the body and the heart function.



2. Adoption of healthy eating habits.



3. Promotion of physical activity and movement habits.



4. Emotional regulation.



Young children need to develop an understanding of their bodies, nutrition, movement, and emotions, as these form the foundation for lifelong health and well-being. When children **learn about their bodies**—not just as “science,” but as the means through which they move, feel, learn, and care for themselves—they build self-awareness, confidence, and the ability to recognize and respond to their needs. Exploring how the body works, paying attention to its signals, and using the senses to interact with the environment fosters curiosity and a sense of wonder that strengthens their connection to themselves and the world around them.

At the same time, developing early **nutritional literacy** helps children understand how food supports their growth, energy, and learning. By exploring foods through their colors, textures, and flavors, and by recognizing the value of a varied and balanced diet, children begin to form positive eating habits. Involving them in food choices and preparation, alongside supportive family role modeling, reinforces these behaviors in meaningful ways.

Equally important is promoting **regular physical activity** as a natural and enjoyable part of daily life. Movement not only strengthens the body but also supports mental well-being, helping children associate being active with fun, health, and emotional balance, while encouraging healthy limits around sedentary behaviors.

Finally, supporting children in **recognizing, regulating and expressing their emotions** contributes to their overall development. Learning to identify feelings, practice self-regulation, and engage in creative expression empowers children to navigate their inner world with confidence and resilience. Together, these areas nurture the development of healthy, aware, and capable individuals from an early age.

Behavioral Targets

Across all domains, the program targets specific health behaviors that research has shown to be critical for preventing cardiovascular disease and promoting lifelong well-being:

Nutrition: Choosing whole and balanced meals, limiting ultra-processed foods, and increasing fruits and vegetables.

Movement: Engaging in daily physical activity and reducing sedentary screen time.

Emotional recognition and regulation: Recognizing, naming, and regulating emotions.

Sleep: Establishing consistent sleep schedules that allow for adequate rest.

These behavioral goals are woven throughout the sessions in age-appropriate, engaging ways, whether through audiovisual materials, games, digital books, in-person activities, or family activities.

Materials and Resources

The Dr. Fuster and Friends Program was designed to provide everything you need for successful implementation. Our goal is to equip you with ready-to-use, high-quality, and fun materials that make delivery smooth, engaging, and effective.

All materials in one place

Every program resource is available digitally- in English and Spanish- through the website app www.fusterfriends.com

- **Community Partner's Guide:** This guide is your roadmap for implementation.
- **Transmedia Content:** Dr. Fuster and Friends is built as an ecosystem in which each component—audiovisual, digital, physical, and in-person—contributes to a different way of experiencing the content, allowing learning to occur organically and meaningfully.
- **Weekly Guides:** Each of the 32 lessons is supported by a pedagogical guide and age-appropriate activities for Community Health Partners.
- **Weekly Family Challenges:** Designed to expand and reinforce each session by engaging families with at-home activities.
- **Family Engagement Toolkit:** Four creative materials to promote family interaction and exploration for each domain.
- **MOOC:** Online modules covering heart science, pedagogy, and program delivery.

Session Structure

Every session in the Dr. Fuster and Friends program is built around a consistent structure that supports both engagement and learning.

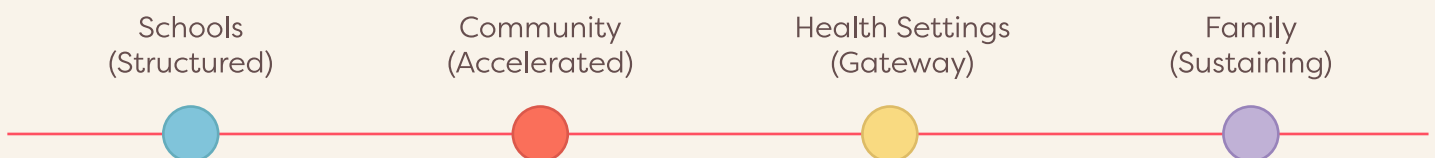
1. **Movement activity:** The session begins with an energizer designed to spark curiosity and get students moving.
2. **Dr. Fuster and Friends Transmedia Content:** WATCH - PLAY - READ or SING.
3. **Exploration and Creation:** Simple customizable activities that engage children deeper in the comprehension of the key curricular messages.
4. **Reflect and close**

Family Weekly Challenges come with each session to reinforce the learning and healthy behaviors at home.

Register on the website www.fusterfriends.com to access implementation routes and follow progress.

Fuster and Friends Implementation Guide Across Settings

Fuster and Friends is a flexible, multi-context program designed to be implemented across schools, community organizations, health settings, and family environments. While the program maintains a core structure of 32 sessions, it can be adapted to different rhythms and institutional needs.



Implementation Options at a Glance:

Setting	Duration	Frequency	Session Length	Purpose
1. Schools	16 weeks	2/week	~1 hour	Deep learning & habit formation.
2. Community	4–8 weeks	4/week	1–2 hours	Intensive immersion.
3. Health Settings	Ongoing	Continuous	Short exposures	Awareness & recruitment.
4. Family	Flexible	Weekly	Flexible	Reinforcement & bonding.

1. School Settings – Standard model A steady pace allows gradual progression, building knowledge, attitudes, and healthy habits over time.



Duration:
16 weeks



Frequency:
2/week



Session Length:
~1 hour



Total:
32 sessions

- Designed for deep learning and habit formation within school routines.
- Pairs well with classroom structure, repetition, and developmental sequencing.
- Maintains consistent exposure while allowing practice between sessions.

2. Community Settings – Condensed model

Community organizations can deliver the full curriculum more intensively while preserving the same 32-session experience.



Duration:
4–8 weeks



Frequency:
4/week



Session Length:
1–2 hours



Total:
32 sessions

- Ideal for YMCAs, after-school programs, recreation centers, and faith-based organizations.
- Creates immersive participation and concentrated reinforcement.
- Useful when calendar windows are short but implementation intensity can be high.

3. Health Settings – Engagement model

Health settings provide ongoing, continuous, short exposures that raise awareness, recruit families, and connect them into the broader implementation ecosystem.

**Duration:**

Ongoing

**Frequency:**

Continuous

**Format:**

Short exposures

**Gateway Function:**

Health settings = GATEWAY – identify families, connect them to the full 32-session program.

Patient Touchpoints and Tools

Waiting Room

Posters + audiovisual content on loop (TV).

Consultation office

Growth chart, plush character, stickers.

QR Code Scan

Digital resources.

Brochure Handout

During clinical visit.

Family Enrollment

Connect to community program or website.

Follow-Up Visits

Reinforcement.

4. Family Settings – Flexible model

Families can move through the curriculum with a flexible schedule and multiple touchpoints per week, reinforcing program themes through home routines, play, and shared activities.

**Schedule:**

Flexible

**Cadence:**

Multiple sessions per week

**Purpose:**

Reinforcement, bonding, and habit transfer to the home

Family Toolkit

Tools: Take-home challenges, Recipe book · Emotions portfolio · e-Books
· Digital & Board games

Key Considerations

- All settings deliver the same 4-pillar curriculum.
- The family component remains consistent across all implementation models.
- Agents adapt the RHYTHM – not the CONTENT.
- Minimum Dosage (Key Consideration Across All Settings).

For maximum impact, it is recommended to deliver at least 75% of the program sessions (a minimum of 24 out of 32). Regardless of the implementation setting, maintaining this minimum dosage should be a central planning and monitoring priority.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Teachers (School-Based Implementation)

Teachers are central to the success of Fuster and Friends. In school settings, they serve as the **primary facilitators of learning, habit formation, and continuity.**

Core responsibilities:

- **Complete structured training** in primordial prevention (via the MOOC on Fuster and Friends website), ensuring a solid understanding of the program's pedagogical and health foundations.
- **Become fully familiar with the curriculum and materials** (available at www.fusterfriends.com), including session plans, audiovisual content, and complementary resources.
- **Integrate the 32 sessions into the school schedule**, aligning them with classroom routines, cross-curricular opportunities, and existing learning objectives.
- **Facilitate engaging, participatory learning experiences**, fostering reflection, dialogue, and application to students' daily lives.
- **Model healthy behaviors and attitudes**, reinforcing the program's messages through everyday classroom practices.
- **Monitor student engagement and progress**, adapting pacing and strategies as needed while maintaining fidelity to the program.

Role of Community Health Partners (Community & Health Settings)

Community health partners are key to extending the program beyond schools, acting as **designers, facilitators, and connectors** across community and health ecosystems.

Core responsibilities:

- **Complete structured training** in primordial prevention (via the MOOC) to ensure conceptual and practical alignment.
- **Adapt the implementation model to the setting** (community centers, clinics, outreach programs), while maintaining **fidelity to the core curriculum and learning objectives**.
- **Design delivery strategies that fit local rhythms**, including condensed or intensive formats, ensuring that minimum dosage (75% of sessions) is achieved whenever possible.
- **Create enabling environments for engagement**, using incentives, communication strategies, and culturally relevant approaches to reach children and families.
- **Leverage health spaces as entry points** (gateway model), promoting awareness, recruitment, and continued participation at home or in community programs.
- **Model healthy behaviors and enthusiasm**, reinforcing credibility and trust.
- **Oversee basic data collection and monitoring** (e.g., attendance, participation, feedback), using this information to improve implementation and support sustainability.

Role of Families (Home-Based Reinforcement and Sustainability)

Families are the **anchors of long-term behavior change**. Their role is essential for reinforcing and sustaining the habits introduced through the program.

Core responsibilities:

- **Engage regularly with program activities at home**, ideally several times per week, adapting to family routines.
- **Participate in Weekly Challenges**, using them as opportunities for shared learning and bonding.
- **Complete “Do at Home” projects**, such as:
 - Preparing healthy recipes together.
 - Exploring emotions and communication.
 - Playing educational games about the body.
 - Engaging in physical activity and movement exploration.
- **Reinforce key messages and habits**, connecting program content to everyday decisions and routines.
- **Support continuity and minimum dosage**, ensuring children remain engaged across settings (school, community, health spaces, and home).

Model positive behaviors and attitudes, creating a home environment that supports well-being.

Dr. Fuster and Friends Program: Components

Competency	Week	Weekly Concept	Session	Session Title	Transmedia Material
BODY KNOWLEDGE AND CARE	1	Marvel at Your Body	1	How Amazing is Our Body	SONG "Your Body Like an Orchestra"
			2	Discover our Main Organs and Senses	GAME Body Knowledge Board Game Printable
	7	Listen to Your Body	13	What Makes Sleep So Special?	ANIMATED EPISODE "When our body says SHHH"
			14	The Signals of our Bodies	SONG "Our body sends us signals"
	10	Rest is Important	19	Other Ways to Rest	LIVE ACTION Other Strategies to Rest (Ivanna)
			20	Why Healthy Habits? Recap	Activity sheet Printable
	14	Applying What We Learned	27	Happy Heart Habits	E-GAME "Mimobot Pet Care"
NUTRITIONAL LITERACY AND DIETARY BEHAVIORS	2	Eat the Colors You See	3	Eat the Colors you See	ANIMATED EPISODE Nutrition
			4	Why Do We Need Different Foods?	SONG Understanding different foods
	8	Eat Natural	15	Taste Adventure	LIVE ACTION Nutrition (Michelle y Nia)
			16	Natural Foods are Great!	SONG "Reduce ultraprocessed foods, prefer natural"
	12	Creating Our Meals	23	Our Body Loves Breakfast	E-BOOK Nutrition
			24	Cooking Experiments	E-GAME Dr. Fuster Chef
	14	Applying What We Learned	28	Food Detectives!	Activity sheet Printable

Dr. Fuster and Friends Program: Components

Competency	Week	Weekly Concept	Session	Session Title	Transmedia Material
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND MOVEMENT HABITS	3	Movement is Great	5	Movement is Great!	ANIMATED EPISODE Physical activity
			6	Finding Everyday Movements	SONG Everyday Movement Adventures
	6	Finding Everyday Movements	11	Ways I Move Every Day	Activity sheet Printable
			12	Role Play From Still to Moving	Activity sheet Printable
	9	Explore the Moving Body	17	Move Your Heart	E-GAME Social Movement Game
			18	Happy Body Circle	Activity sheet Printable
	13	More Movement Ideas	25	Let's Dance	SONG Dance to the Rythm You Like
			26	Let's Play Outdoors + Reduce Screen	E-BOOK Screen Time
EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION	4	What are Emotions and Why do We Have Them	7	How Emotions Feel	SONG How Emotions Feel
			8	Emotional Expression and	ANIMATED EPISODE Emotional regulation
	5	Expressing Our Emotions	9	Love: a Beautiful Emotion	LIVE ACTION Expressing Love to a Friend (Irene)
			10	Regulating Tough Emotions	LIVE ACTION Emotional regulation (Luc)
	11	Diversity and Uniqueness	21	I Am Unique	E-BOOK Highlighting our uniqueness
			22	Diversity is Beautiful	SONG Diversity Makes Us Shine
	15	Applying What We Learned	29	Recognizing Situations and Emotions	E-GAME Emotions Avatar
			30	Let's Learn From Mistakes	E-BOOK Frame mistakes as learning opportunities

Dr. Fuster and Friends: Curriculum Overview by Session

Competency	Week	Weekly Concept	Session	Session Title	Transmedia Material
INTRO	1			Healthy Habits, Happy Life!	Welcome Sheet
BODY KNOWLEDGE	1	Marvel at Your Body	1	How Amazing is Our Body	SONG "Your Body Like an Orchestra"
			2	Discover our Main Organs and Senses	GAME Body Knowledge Board Game Printable
NUTRITION	2	Eat the Colors You See	3	Eat the Colors you See	ANIMATED EPISODE Nutrition
			4	Why Do We Need Different Foods?	SONG Understanding different foods
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	3	Movement is Great	5	Movement is Great!	ANIMATED EPISODE Physical activity
			6	Finding Everyday Movements	SONG Everyday Movement Adventures
EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION	4	What are Emotions and Why do We Have Them	7	How Emotions Feel	SONG How Emotions Feel
			8	Emotional Expression and Regulation	ANIMATED EPISODE Emotional regulation
EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION	5	Expressing Our Emotions	9	Love: a Beautiful Emotion	LIVE ACTION Expressing Love to a Friend (Irene)
			10	Regulating Tough Emotions	LIVE ACTION Emotional regulation (Luc)
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	6	Finding Everyday Movements	11	Ways I Move Every Day	Activity sheet Printable
			12	Role Play From Still to Moving	Activity sheet Printable
BODY KNOWLEDGE	7	Listen to Your Body	13	What Makes Sleep So Special?	ANIMATED EPISODE "When our body says SHHH"
			14	The Signals of our Bodies	SONG "Our body sends us signals"
NUTRITION	8	Eat Natural	15	Taste Adventure	LIVE ACTION Nutrition (Michelle y Nia)
			16	Natural Foods are Great!	SONG "Reduce ultraprocessed foods, prefer natural"

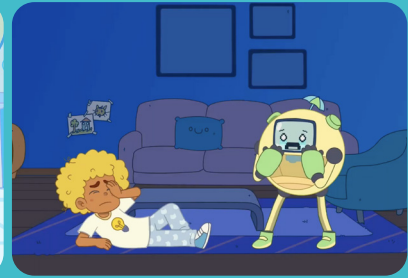
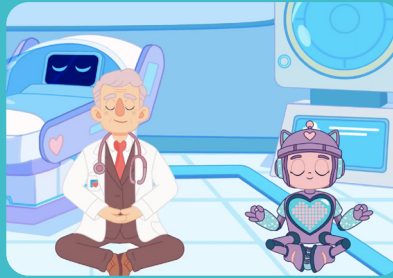
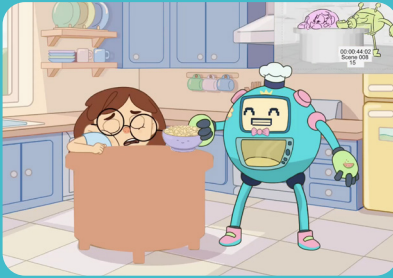
Dr. Fuster and Friends: Curriculum Overview by Session

Competency	Week	Weekly Concept	Session	Session Title	Transmedia Material
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	9	Explore the Moving Body	17	Move Your Heart	E-GAME Social Movement Game
			18	Happy Body Circle	Activity sheet Printable
BODY KNOWLEDGE	10	Rest is Important	19	Other Ways to Rest	LIVE ACTION Other Strategies to Rest (Ivanna)
			20	Why Healthy Habits? Recap	Activity sheet Printable
EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION	11	Diversity and Uniqueness	21	I Am Unique	E-BOOK Highlighting our uniqueness
			22	Diversity is Beautiful	SONG Diversity Makes Us Shine
NUTRITION	12	Creating Our Meals	23	Our Body Loves Breakfast	E-BOOK Nutrition
			24	Cooking Experiments	E-GAME Dr. Fuster Chef
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	13	More Movement Ideas	25	Let's Dance	SONG Dance to the Rythm You Like
			26	Let's Play Outdoors + Reduce Screen Time	E-BOOK Screen Time
BODY KNOWLEDGE NUTRITION	14	Applying What We Learned	27	Happy Heart Habits	E-GAME "Mimobot Pet Care"
			28	Food Detectives!	Activity sheet Printable
EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION	15	Applying What We Learned	29	Recognizing Situations and	E-GAME Emotions Avatar
			30	Let's Learn From Mistakes	E-BOOK Frame mistakes as learning opportunities
CLOSURE	16	Celebrating What We Learned	31	Revisiting What We Learned	Challenge Cards
			32	Closing Celebration	Insignia Party

Transmedia Content



Animated Series



Videogames



E-Books



Live Action



Promotional Materials



Educational Resources

Meet the Characters

Dr. Fuster

**HEART HERO
PROTAGONIST**

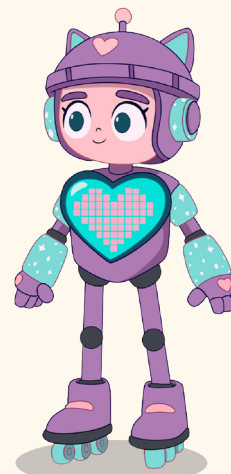
A cardiologist with super hearing who guides children to discover their powers.



Cory

**CARE-BOT
ASSISTANT**

A helpful robot who encourages independence and trying new things.



Squiggles (5-6 yrs)

POWER: PLAY & MOVE

A curious explorer who loves adventure but learns to handle frustration.



YumYum (6-7 yrs)

POWER: EAT COLORFULLY

Musical and energetic; learns emotional regulation through rhythm.



Bloxie (5-6 yrs)

POWER: KNOW YOUR BODY

Sensitive and creative; teaches that every home is full of love.



Chanté (5 yrs)

POWER: KNOW YOUR BODY

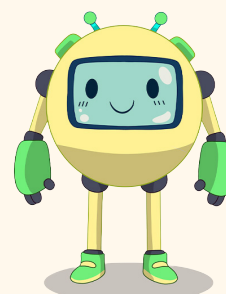
The youngest; empathetic, affectionate, and kind to everyone.



Aunt Safe

ANTAGONIST

Meaning well, she overprotects children, preventing them from growing.



Mimo-bots

PAMPER-BOTS

Robots that do everything for kids, representing toxic over-comfort.

Main Partners

American College of Cardiology

The American College of Cardiology (ACC) envisions a world where science, knowledge and innovation optimize cardiovascular care and outcomes.

We believe in the power of community. With more than 60,000 members worldwide spanning the entire cardiovascular team, we serve as the professional home for clinicians and researchers seeking the latest science, research and education. United with our members, chapters and global cardiovascular partners, we are focused on transforming cardiovascular care and improving heart health for all.

For more information on the partnership with Dr. Fuster and additional resources see <https://fusterheartmovement.org/>



Dr. Valentin Fuster

At the heart of this project is the leadership and vision of Dr. Valentín Fuster, President of Mount Sinai Heart, Physician-in-Chief at The Mount Sinai Hospital, and General Director of the National Center for Cardiovascular Research (CNIC) in Spain. Dr. Fuster is internationally recognized as one of the foremost leaders in cardiovascular medicine, and his pioneering work in both research and education has significantly shaped the world's understanding of heart health.



Dr. Fuster believes that health education during early childhood can act as a “booster shot” that reinforces earlier messages and provides young people with renewed motivation and skills. His vision for this program is not only to reduce cardiovascular risk factors, but also to empower a generation of young leaders who understand that taking care of their hearts, minds, and bodies is both achievable and essential for their future.

