

Abstract Submitted
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Starting Introductory Physics with a BANG¹ RACHEL WYATT,
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Physics Teacher — The advent of a new era in physics is being ushered in by the
Large Hadron Collider, and it provides a prime curricular opportunity to intro-
duce students to physics in an exciting and relevant way. We decided to begin our
freshmen-level physics course this year with a focus on the LHC and several as-
sociated particle physics concepts. The unit included measurements and analysis
of radioactive sources, observations of a cloud chamber, and discussions of current
media concerning the LHC ranging from the “LHC Rap” on YouTube to blogs
and editorials addressing the potential creation of black holes. This approach with
first-time physics students helped them to view the subject as meaningful and con-
temporary. We will outline the curriculum in further detail and share compelling
anecdotal evidence that supports the use of the LHC as a focal point in beginning
a physics course.

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