Brain Blasters: A Pilot Study Designed To Enhance the Utilization Of Classroom Physical Activity

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Brain Blasters: A Pilot Study Designed To Enhance the Utilization Of Classroom Physical Activity

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing classroom physical activity (PA) resources is one method that can increase PA and has been found to improve on-task behavior as well as academic performance. Based on surveys/interviews with teachers in the Omaha metro a pilot program entitled “Brain Blasters” was developed. The program focused on increasing teacher’s knowledge of classroom PA resources and ways to overcome reported barriers for utilizing PA in their classroom. The pilot was executed in two elementary classrooms in the Omaha metro area. The pilot consisted of identifying a PA champion within each school to promote the program, conducting a 45-minute training, and sending weekly resources via e-mails, videos, and teacher mailboxes with in the school. The evaluation consisted of both quantitative and qualitative measures. Results found teachers had a positive view of the project and the majority found the resources to be helpful. Future classroom PA promotion efforts should work with school personnel to identify the best methods for delivering resources to each particular school.

RESULTS

Results of the follow-up evaluation survey are provided in Table 1. A majority (81.3%) noted that the weekly e-mails (81.3%), mailbox materials (73.3%), and videos (68.8%) were useful. A third of the teachers though stated that time inhibited their ability to either view or utilize them. When asked what the most effective Brain Blaster resource was, 50% answered “GoNoodle.” When asked about which method of receiving resources was the most useful answers varied. The top method was the videos (37.5%) followed by the e-mails and receiving resources in their mailbox (25% each). Three teachers reported they did not use any of the resources due to lack of time.

Table 1. Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The weekly e-mails I received were a useful resource</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Facebook page was a useful resource</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “Brain Blaster of the Week” videos were a useful resource</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mailbox resources I received were an effective resource</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, one teacher noted she would like to feel more support from district administration regarding classroom PA. She stated, “You know principals, it’s a trickle-down effect, they are put under a lot of pressure by their bosses…and then all that pressure comes down to us. And so, if we could get support from you know your superintendents and your curriculum writers, to see the value in it, I think that would be powerful.

Discussion

Overall, the post program surveys and interviews showed that a majority of teachers had a positive view of the project and felt the resources were useful. The best method for disseminating resources though was unclear. When looking at results by school, responses within school #1 differed between videos, e-mails, and mailbox resources but at school #2 teachers primarily thought the videos were the most useful. Importantly, few people perceived the Facebook page as useful. It appears the best method for sharing existing resources varies. Future classroom PA promotion efforts should work with school personnel to identify the best method for delivering resources for each particular school.

INTRODUCTION

Individual classroom PA resources have shown to be effective in improving on-task behavior, academic outcomes, and overall PA in elementary aged children. However, teachers may not be aware of the numerous free or low-cost resources available. Given that teachers report time as a barrier to implementing and learning about classroom PA, gaining an understanding of how to best promote these resources could increase teachers’ knowledge and improve their utilization of classroom PA.

METHODS

• The pilot was developed based on survey/interview feedback from area teachers in five school districts.
• The pilot was tested in two elementary schools in the Omaha Metro area.
• The pilot involved identifying a PA champion and conducting a 45-minute training.
• Resources included weekly e-mails, classroom mailbox “resources of the week”, videos of surrounding area teachers implementing classroom PA, and weekly updates on a Facebook page.
• After the pilot’s completion all teachers (n=16) participated in a follow-up evaluation survey and a sample of teachers (n=6) took part in a brief follow-up interview.

Six teachers took part in a follow-up interview. All teachers noted some degree of improvement in their use of classroom PA during the project. One teacher noted, “I’ve had GoNoodle since last year but…I just used it off and on. I’m using it more this year, especially since we did this project.” When asked about the barriers to implementing classroom PA all six teachers agreed that lack of time kept them from being able to utilize the weekly resources as effectively as they might have liked to. One teacher commented,

“...so busy teaching and unless purposefully maybe put it into your plans that “I need to take a break right now', you’re going to forget”.

Another teacher expressed how she overcame the barrier of time:

“…well I really like when it fits into my curriculum…like now I’ve got some videos of kids dancing, but, at the same time they’re skip counting by eights, so they’ve got the skips counts and they’re dancing with it and so they’re getting all the movement, the activity, and it’s just reinforcing multiplication tables and division tables by eight.”