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Play it Forward: Cooperative Learning & Structured Play During Recess

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Abstract

Cooperative learning and structured play (CLASP) are two things that have gone unappreciated in the modern educational setting. This is an important issue for many local low-income schools as the dropout rate is so high. CLASP ideals come with a wide array of positive outcomes that look to brighten the futures of affected youth. CLASP provides an incredible number of scholarly benefits: increased school involvement, higher GPA, improved interpersonal relationships, increased ability to work as a team, etc. This capstone identifies these critical benefits and addresses the best way to properly utilize CLASP within the school setting. The three primary stakeholders chosen are the Principal/Vice Principal, teachers, and students. All three of which stand to benefit from CLASP pedagogy. This Capstone implemented a prototype program in a local elementary school. Based on the results from the program, it has been made clear that the best way to utilize CLASP in the school setting is through the incorporation of service learning activity leaders during lunch recess. Furthermore, implementation of CLASP programs is minimal while the outcomes can be monumental.

Play it Forward: The Importance of Cooperative Learning & Structured Play During Recess

“No, I don’t want to play tag, recess is the only time I get to play soccer with my friends,” said Leo one afternoon during service learning. Through my personal experience, the positive influence of sports and structured play rarely reach many low-income schools. These are schools that can barely get by, let alone flourish. I see this as a major issue that has not been properly addressed.

Recess is a time and place where you find hundreds of children running around, laughing, and playing. I am sure we all share some of our best school memories through events happening at recess times. I also recall spending many recesses thinking of something new to do and coming up with nothing. As a kid, I wish I had the opportunity to participate in more sports teams. My parents worked from 7am-6pm every day. I spent all day everyday of my early childhood at school and I did not play sports. I did my homework and typically played tag. In my small town, we did not have any sports-related school programs, and I feel that I missed out. I had other friends that were in club teams for soccer, and they were incredible. Once I could finally join soccer season, I was far behind the curve and that is not where I wanted to be. I firmly believe that having the opportunity for children to come play a structured form of sports will not go unnoticed and underappreciated.

One reason I feel this way is because we had immediate results during the very first day of implementing this capstone into our chosen school, “Webster Elementary.” As the recess went by, we had a solid pack of 10-25 students playing along with us in our games. As one grade level was excused, the next one would fill their spots, creating balance. Since it was our first day at the school, we expected not many students to know to come join us. We played all kinds of games

which catered to all types of student ability. It was not until after the one hour and forty-five minute time slot that we had realized the difference our presence made. As we packed up and made our way to leave, one of the yard monitors approached us. She began, "How often do you guys come?" We responded, "Every other Thursday, why?" She stated, "This was the first recess since I began supervising that we did not have a single fight in the field. I wish you guys could come more often." This came as a shock to us all. I also recall as the students left our games to go back to class, they would ask with hopeful eyes, "When do you guys come back?" Unfortunately our schedules only allow us to come every other Thursday, but we did not want to disappoint the students. We responded with "As soon as we can." I could see the student's eyes light up. This was only our first day! The questions never slowed down. Every single day we went, the students made it clear to us that they wanted us around and that they wanted us a lot more frequently. During our last visit a young student asked, "can you guys play games with us everyday?" To which we responded with "why?" The student then went on to say, "I don't usually play with anyone during recess, but when you guys come I play with *Everyone*." Leading our games not only exposes the children to cooperative learning and structured play, but it also exposes them to each other. The cooperative learning aspect allows students to work together and even form friendships.

If I have learned anything from that experience, it is that some students greatly enjoy structured play and want more of it around. This was both a confirmation of our idea, but also a call to action. What if we could come every week? Or even every day? What difference could we make in the lives of the children? Only time will tell.

Literature Synthesis and Integration

In elementary and middle school, recess is a time of mayhem and freedom. This has proven to have benefits in allowing children an outlet for their energy and internal crazy, but is not necessarily a time of learning. Rosenwater (2009) argues that there is a direct link between organized sports and academic success in youth. Participation and application of organized sports during recess will provide students with structured opportunities to learn and grow through physical activity. A dominant barrier that Rosenwater (2009) found regarding organized sports is that students of low income schools simply did not have access to opportunities to participate. Incorporating a sports program during recess will allow all students free access to sports, as well as encourage academic achievement. Having organized sports programs held during recess will allow all demographics of students the ability to participate and, in turn, reap the benefits.

Why is it an issue?

Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin (2005) recognize that youth programs are extremely beneficial, but also out of reach for countless potential beneficiaries. “For example, youth sport programs are becoming increasingly expensive, competitive and elitist” (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). The present issue is that there is a lack of access to sport programs for low income youth. “With sports acting as a powerful attractant, youth organizations must be helped to expand their reach in all communities, conveying information about life chances, careers, and places beyond the neighborhood and engaging young people in community and other constructive pursuits that foster education and health” (Poinsett, 1996, p.4). Poinsett (1996) speaks to the point also made by Rosenwater (2009), students of low income schools would benefit the most from these types

of programs. However, the academic success is not limited to students of low income economic status, students of all backgrounds have been shown to have higher grades when part of a sports team/program. The incorporation of youth sport programs during recess will act to combat and enhance many aspects of adolescent life. Potential benefits include: Countering rising rates of obesity, reduction of “high risk” behavior in at risk youth, improvement in academic areas, learning of life skills, and encouraging healthy development for students (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005).

Educational Significance

Lev Vygotsky developed the Social Development Theory, which establishes the idea that social interaction plays a fundamental role in cognitive development. Vygotsky also notes that the environment and people that surround the individual will directly influence both how and what an individual thinks about (McLeod, 1970). This theory can be positively utilized and applied to school sport programs. Creating an environment that is both welcoming and engaging for students, while at the same time putting the primary focus on school and the development of cognitive skills, will only yield positive results in students.

Broh (2002) recognizes that participation in athletics and academic performance are interconnected. Children that engage in sports and participate do better in school setting in many different ways. Students that participate in athletics are shown to be associated with an improved grade point average, higher educational aspirations, increased college attendance, and reduced absenteeism (Broh, 2002, p. 70). The benefits do not stop there. Bailey (2006) identifies five domains that physical education and sport can benefit children. Benefits are physical, lifestyle, affective, social, and cognitive. All aspects of life can be positively affected by sports. In the

physical sense, sports provide children with a positive setting to channel their energy. Inactivity is proven to be one of the most significant causes of death, disability, and reduced quality of life across the globe (Bailey, 2006, p. 398). With this being said, the involvement of sports encourages physical activity year round. As far as lifestyle development, physical activity greatly reduces an individual's risk for heart disease, premature mortality, and obesity. Sports have been valued as one of the best, cost-effective, ways to influence future generations to lead physically active lives. Bailey (2006) concludes with the notion that mere recognition of the effectiveness of physical education and sports is inadequate. Educated individuals need to stress the necessity of these programs so that implementation of high quality programs may reach out to all schools and better the lives of all children.

Historical Context

The rapid increase in childhood obesity suggests that schools need to reconsider their role and find necessary ways to address the growing problem. “Over the past 20 years, obesity rates in US children and youth have skyrocketed. Among children ages 6 to 11, 15.8% are overweight (≥ 95 th percentile body mass index [BMI] for age) and 31.2% are overweight or at risk for overweight (≥ 85 th percentile BMI for age)” (Pate, 2006, p. 1214). These percentages have only been increasing as years pass. For several decades, organized sports programs have been recognized for their potential, but lack proper implementation. Inadequate implementation results in a slow but sure failure, which reaps little to no positive benefits. Historically participation in sports during youth has been assumed to derive many positive health benefits. Rising obesity rates are partially due to the fact that academic achievement is the focal point for many schools. Pate (2006) recognizes that the increase in mandated high-stakes testing across

the nation has come as a direct threat to recess and play. Parents want their children to be the smartest, schools want to appear as the highest scoring schools, so they do not want wasted valuable learning time. On paper, this makes sense, but in reality the benefits of a little physical activity throughout the day create much better students that are more equipped and ready for learning.

National guidelines state that children should participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate/vigorous physical activity every day, but the reality is that less than 50% of children and 10% of adolescents meet these guidelines (Leek et al., 2011). The data collected in this study provides very clear evidence that childhood obesity can be prevented by the incorporation of sports programs in schools. Leek (2011) found that the greatest decline in physical activity happens in teenage years and is ever more increased when the individuals do not have a background in physical activity. There is a devastating snowball effect at play, and it needs to be stopped. This poses the call to action that the implementation of sports programs must come in early childhood so that the foundation may be laid.

What Can Be Done

Many sources agree with Pate (2006) in that the best time to incorporate a sports program is during recess. Relatively speaking, every child goes to school. Recess is a time where all students are looking to engage in some sort of play, so having a form of play already structured and provided will provide many benefits. Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin (2005) provide a critical insight, children of low socioeconomic status do not receive equal opportunity regarding sports programs. “Studies in developed nations generally indicate that elite athletes come from middle or upper class families. Developed nations must take steps (e.g. create policies and

programs) to assure that all youth have the opportunity to engage in sports and to develop their talent to its potential” (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005, para. 18). This is a very clear call to action with the goal of change. The discrepancies in youth participation and benefit are influenced by many other factors. Pate (2006) points out that not all children have means of transportation to get to programs outside of the school and local community setting. Something must be done to accommodate student’s current schedules and be available in a way that all students will have access if they want it. Strong et al. (2005) found that increasing the habitual moderate to vigorous intensity of physical activity in youth will promote health benefits for an individual’s future.

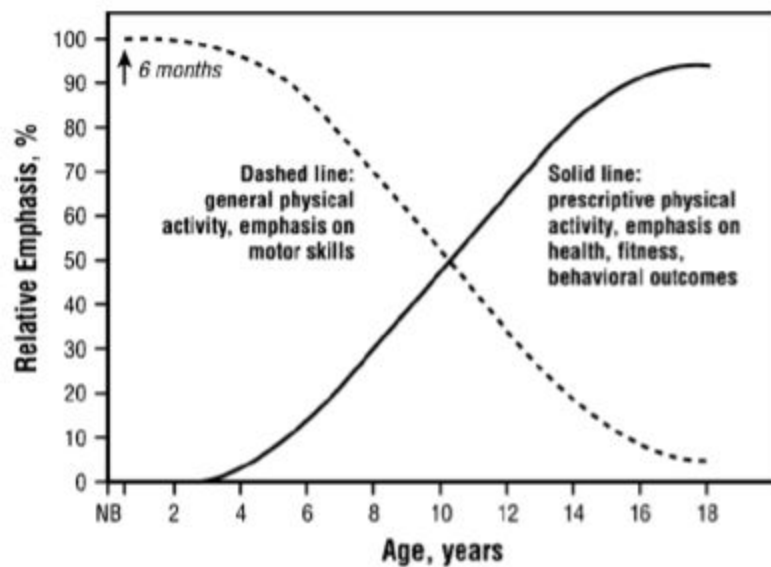


Figure 1. Changing emphasis of physical activity during childhood and adolescence. The figure is modified after R. M. Malina. Fitness and performance: adult health and the culture of youth, new paradigms? In: R. J. Park and M. H. Eckert, editors. New possibilities, new paradigms? (American Academy of Physical Education Papers No. 24). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers; 1991. p. 30-8.

As seen in figure 1, the emphasis of physical activity outcomes grows exponentially as the years go on. Strong et al (2005) suggests that a strong foundation of physical activity in childhood will reinforce equally strong activity as well as benefits throughout one's young

adulthood. With this being said, successful youth sports programs are not so easy to come by. Rosenwater (2009) describes that a successful program comes with many parts. The first steps to take are to create and highlight models of quality programs and find ways in which successful programs can be effectively implemented into a local community. The success does not stop there. One must design a way in which programs may be monitored and kept in check to ensure they are promoting a positive learning climate. The next step is to evaluate programs with specific interventions that are designed to engage and develop the programs further. Finally, identify characteristics that cause the program to thrive, and use them as pedagogy is formed and applied to the school setting (Rosenwater, 2009).

Methods

Students consistently miss out on sports-related opportunities. Many students do not have the privilege of playing sports outside of school activities. The literature recognizes the importance that physical activity plays in the students' academics, emotional health, and overall wellness. It is unjust to not provide students with the opportunity to be physically active during school, where they spend a significant portion of their lives. With that being said, the researchers identified a focus question: what steps can be taken to improve the quality of student lives through the incorporation of cooperative learning and structured play programs at lunch recess?

Context

Nunez (2017) explained the following:

Webster Elementary School is a part of the Oceanside School District in Stumps, California. The surrounding city of Stumps has considerable economic disparity among various city sectors. The more affluent parts of the city see a ratio of one person impoverished to every 25 people not in poverty. The Oceanside district, however, has a ratio of one impoverished person to every five people not in poverty.

The school has a population of 724 students, which has grown from 467 students since 2013 when the school first opened. On average, there are roughly 26 students per classroom at Webster.

Out of those 6724 students, 84% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. 448 students at Webster Elementary are English Language Learners and 440 students are of Spanish or Mexican descent.

In the 2014/15 school year, Webster pulled considerable averages of fifth-grade students meeting Healthy Fitness Zone on the Physical Fitness Exam. Almost every category received an average of 80% or higher in terms of number of students able to meet that physical goal. However, only 56% of students met the body composition goal and 25% of them were considered “at health-risk” and were flagged for needing improvement. Only 51% of the fifth-graders met the fitness goal for flexibility.

Participants and Participant Selection

We invited a number of students and staff from the Webster Elementary School community to participate in this study. This group of prospective participants were invited to participate because they were directly impacted by the implementation of the prototype program. All students had the opportunity to benefit from the program, and all grade levels were invited to participate. The participants for our interviews were selected based on their role in the school, and the impact of our program on their own job or school experience at Webster Elementary.

Cynthia Rico. Our first interviewee was a recess monitor. She was a latina, who is bilingual. She was roughly 45 years old. She has worked at Webster Elementary for four years, and knows the students personally. Her primary role was the grass field monitor. The field was much bigger than the court and the children played a lot harder in the field. We ran our programs in the field, which made her job easier. That is why we selected her. After one recess we walked up to her and asked if we could formally interview her. She gave us verbal consent, but we wanted to make sure no lines were crossed so we printed out the necessary interview forms. As our willing participant, she was asked to answer our recess monitor questions (see

below) and reflect on her experience with our program, as well as the influence she feels our program has on the children that engage with us during lunch recess.

Julie Brown. Our second interviewee was the vice principal of Webster Elementary. She is the individual that allowed us permission to participate with Webster Elementary in the first place. She too is a latina, who is bilingual. It was important for us to interview her because she believed we could make a positive impact on the school during lunch recess, and we wanted to recognize her thoughts as we went through the process of implementing our project. To make this interview happen, we printed out the necessary interview forms to ensure proper consent as well as the ability to quote what she said. We asked her questions along the same line as the field monitor. We asked questions that provoked the vice principal to reflect on issues that arose in the past during the lack of a recess program, as well as the results she found came from our program. We also asked if she would be interested in increasing the number of days each week so that our program would be more effective. She is the individual that implemented the ideas from Playworks to Webster Elementary, so she has knowledge and experience with successful implementation of sports programs in the school setting. She provided key insights about our strengths as well as our shortcomings.

Stephanie Marquez. Stephanie represents the student perspective in this study. She is a third-grader at Webster Elementary who hates math class and loves recess. When asked why she enjoyed recess, she explained that it is a time for her and her friends to run and play games. Stephanie is a self-described “girl-girl”, meaning she does what she can to follow the rules and avoids activities that would get her in trouble. However, she did confide that the worst parts about recess are: a) the bullies, and b) the possibility of getting a behavior referral herself.

Stephanie discussed how she has witnessed physical altercations between students on the playground during this school year. She also described an instance when her friends were overheard using bad language, and her whole friend group had to go to the office and get referrals as a result. This was a prospective previously unconsidered by the research: students may prefer structured play because it minimizes their chances of getting in trouble themselves. When asked about the difference in recess time when it is structured versus unstructured, she replied that when recess is unstructured, she often sits with her friends in a shady spot on the grass. However, when recess was structured with games, Stephanie always participated fully. When asked about how she feels recess could be made even better, she emphasized the need for more equipment, such as basketballs, as well as commenting that she would look forward to recess more if she knew coaches would be leading games everyday.

Researchers

- **Tyler Elwin**

This concern is personally meaningful to me because I feel that the time spent during recess that I was in could have been much more productive. I have experienced, first hand, the time wasting and waiting around that comes with boring recesses. I think it is time we step it up and create programs that are more engaging for students so that they may be able to learn and grow during their free time during recess. Not all students are born leaders, so a little structure goes a long way.

I believe I am fit to carry out this capstone due to my history as an elementary P.E. teacher, my drive for improvement, and my background in sports that allows me to lead. I believe that with the right people in charge, lunch recess sports programs will not simply just waste time until the bell rings, but will provide students with structure and team spirit in hopes of

preparation for success.

Race, ethnicity, social class, education, work experience, physical or mental ability, gender identity, sexual orientation will all play a role in this project. It is hard for me to level with every single unique student, but I feel our differences work as an area of growth and learning. These differences will allow for change that I feel is much needed. I think one of the struggles that I might face is lack of proper equipment as a result of low school budget. I do not have personal experience with a lack of equipment, and I do not know how bad it could be as far as supplies go. I do have personal equipment that I can bring in to help the program take flight. Another bias is that I want to keep the programs sports related. I love sports, and I feel like they bring many necessary areas of learning to those who play them. I do know that some stakeholders will not want their children spending their recess time playing sports when it can be used for study/homework. I am going to have to find a good inbetween.

- **Mary Rossi**

I feel that this issue is imperative for many reasons. Rates of childhood obesity are jarringly high, and we need to find better ways of addressing this issue than cutting the calories they are allowed to have in their school lunches. Exercise and team sports have many physical benefits, in addition to plenty of emotional and social benefits as well. Studies have shown that students benefit from structured sports programs by reducing student exposure to potentially negative influences outside of the school environment.

My qualifications that qualify me to pursue this project include; experience with coaching elementary physical education, past participation in various sports, my interest in working with elementary students, and my background if liberal studies education.

Not every student is going to want to or feel comfortable participating in the program that

we are trying to start. They won't all enjoy sports, or believe themselves to be physically or mentally capable to play. I believe that one of my major biases is that I enjoy playing sports.

I am also unsure as to the amount of extra work this program would put on the staff of the school. If the teachers and faculty are asked to participate as well, some of them may not want to shoulder the extra burden and therefore may be put out. I hope to avoid this by limiting the number of responsibilities the staff would be responsible for.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

- Vice Principal Questions

1. What do you see as the problem with student free time during recess; or What are you concerned about when it comes to students with "too much" free time during recess?
2. Do you feel like students are given enough outlets for all of the energy that they have? Why?
3. What would be the best use of time in order to combat this lack of outlet? During the school day (another recess)? Perhaps a new school program that is more sports related during recess?
4. What is currently being done to further engage students during recess - by whom - and do you think this is good, bad, or indifferent? Why?
5. What do you think should be done about lunch recess time?
6. What do you think are the obstacles/drawbacks/disadvantages to changing current lunch recess programs?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to say about children with abundant free time during lunch recess and/or the improvement/development of lunch recess sports programs?

- Students

1. What's your name?
2. Do you like recess?
3. What are some of the best things about recess?
4. What are some things about recess that aren't so good?
5. Have you noticed a difference in recess on days when coaches lead games from days you're left to do what you want?

6. How do you think recess could be made better?

- Recess Monitor

1. Introductions
2. What made you want to apply for this job?
3. What are the benefits of this job?
4. What are some drawbacks?
5. Have you noticed a difference in recess on days when coaches lead games from days you're left to do what you want?
6. How do you think recess could be made better?

Procedure

The data collection was experience based. The researchers began the project by meeting with the principal and vice principal of Webster Elementary and brainstormed the areas at Webster that they felt had a need for improvement. The Principal & Vice Principal helped us to identify that our time would be best spent during lunch recess, and that the need for structure would not go unnoticed. We then began with Playworks games that were familiar to the kids, before switching to a structured team based sports focus. The participants of our games were simply asked to play. We found that it was easier to get into the motion of things by first playing universal games like tag etc. This allowed us to develop a relationship with the students as well as build a level of respect and control.

Results

For this Capstone project, students and staff at Webster Elementary were interviewed in an effort to gain insight into the current recess experience and how it can be improved upon. This is critical due to the severity of the consequences of inactivity on children's' emotional, physical, and social well being. Students are on average not meeting the 60-minutes of moderate to

vigorous activity per day standard. Because children spend a considerable amount of their time in school, increasing the amount of physical activity a student receives during the school day could lead to an increase in student's overall well being and ultimately lead to a decrease in the number of cases of disease caused by inactivity. An analysis of the data lead to the emergence of three overarching themes and possible action items, shown in Table 1. The selected action item was chosen through an evidence-based evaluation of each of the proposed action items by the following criteria; cost of implementation, time required to implement, and longevity of impact. Based on this evaluation, Option 2 is recommended as the most beneficial opportunity to address lunch recess.

Table 1; Evaluation of Action Items

Options	Cost	Time	Longevity/Reach
Hiring of a lunch recess activities leader	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Partnering with the service learners as lunch recess activities leaders.	Low	Moderate	High
Collaborating with CSUMB's PHYS 121 class	Low	Moderate	Low

Evaluation of Action Items

As stated above, the proposed action items were proposed after interviewing a student, two staff members, and the principal of Webster Elementary.

The interview with Yard Monitor Rico left us with many questions. How can we find a solution that properly addresses the needs of the students? Ms. Rico explained to us that there

are not enough adults on the field to keep control. This led us to draw the conclusion that additional adults would help to keep the peace. This theme of not enough adults to manage the mayhem of recess is something we kept in mind for our other options as well. Option 1 is to hire a full time activities leader. We believe this option would help to keep the peace in the yard, as well as give students the full benefit of our research. This activity leader will become a member of the school staff, or could be a current teacher that gets compensation for leading games during their lunch hour. This would have a moderate cost due to the opening of a job position. The time to implement this would be moderate because this job position would be needed to be added to the school, and then the position would need to be filled. The lunch recess time slot is very short, so there would be difficulty filling a position in the middle of the day with someone outside of the school who would most likely prefer a full-time job. The longevity of this option is high due to the high demand for job opportunities. We do believe that having a hired professional activities leader could have very positive implications. This individual would be very knowledgeable in CLASP, and could lead games accordingly. This position will most likely get filled quickly and there will be competition for the quality of the activity leader, so this option will certainly be effective. One concession however is that not all schools can afford to hire more staff members. This would limit the potential reach of CLASP programs. Not all school districts and individual schools (private) would be able to embrace the benefit of CLASP programs if they cannot hire someone to fill the job of a lunch recess activity leader.

After our interview with Vice Principal Brown, we were enlightened on the positive influence of college students on the school grounds. Brown stated that she believes when the elementary school students see the college students whom they look up to, they become inspired.

This promotes a positive atmosphere in the school because the elementary school students want to try their best to succeed so that they can one day go to college. The second option deals with partnering with college service learning institutes. This option entails collaboration with colleges and local schools. Schools interested in finding CLASP lunch recess activity leaders would formulate a plan with local colleges that would reward college students with service learning hours. This option would reward college students their service learning time requirement for their time leading lunch recess activities. The cost of option two would be very low because activity leaders would be getting payment via service learning required hours. The time is moderate as it would take time and meetings to setup this program. Schools would have to individually meet with college service learning institutes to properly implement a successful policy. Once the initial plan is set in place, the time will severely lower and the process of filling the position will be streamlined. The longevity is high as each generation of college students has a service learning requirement to fill. This position will most likely be filled all of the time during the school years, depending on the number of service learners and the strength of the school-college plan. This option will also have the farthest reach of all options due to the fact that many colleges and majors have service learning requirements. CLASP programs could potentially reach all schools in California, or even more depending on the service learning requirements set by other colleges across the United States.

Option 3 is to partner with the students of Cal State Monterey Bay PHYS 121/L; Integrating Physical Science Class to serve as recess coaches. One of the emergent themes from the data as well as the research suggested that utilizing the recess coaches was beneficial to the overall experience of recess for the students as well as the staff. An evaluation of the local

resources indicated an another possible method for securing a steady stream of volunteer recess coaches could be to collaborate with the PHS 121/L class at CSUMB, which has a lab requirement for students to spend two hours weekly leading physical education classes for elementary students in local skills. The way the class is currently structured, students lead a physical education class twice a week. This action item would include providing the professors of this class an informational flyer outlining the results of this study, and proposing that they consider leading their physical activities during the lunch recess of elementary schools instead of the designated physical education class. This would provide children with twice as many opportunities for physical exertion during their school day, and also fulfill the needs of all three stakeholders by providing more structure and supervision during recess. The cost of this option is rated low, because the PHYS 121 students would be donating their time. The time it would take to implement received a rating of moderate, due to the time it would take to draft an effective flyer and collaborate with the PHYS 121 professors. The potential longevity is rated high, as it could be recycled semester by semester. It is unclear to us the layout of other PHYS 121 classes on other campuses. This could limit the amount of volunteer recess activity leaders. CSUMB has a limited amount of students that take PHYS 121, so the reach of our CLASP program ideas could be very limited. The goal is to have as many schools as possible adopt CLASP programs during lunch recess hour.

Recommendation

The action items were cross-evaluated based on the selected criteria; cost, time, and longevity. The cost of implementation was considered due to the limited amount of funds available for school programs. The amount of time required to implement the action item was

also assessed because of the short amount of time available to the researchers to create an impact. The longevity of impact was evaluated because of the nature of physical well being, physical activity must be maintained to have lasting impacts. We recommend option 2, which would incorporate service learners as lunch recess activity leaders. This option has been chosen above the others due to the fact that it would yield the highest reward at the lowest cost. This option also has the ability to expose elementary students to college students and can work to inspire and promote success in school. Option 2 works hand in hand with our research by promoting academic success as well as rewarding academic success. Giving service learning hours for time spent leading activities will work perfectly with low-budget schools, which ensures that all demographics of children will have the opportunity to benefit from the programs.

Concessions and Limitations

There are concessions and limitations to option 2. There is no guarantee that a service learner will be available every day of the week during lunch recess, so the hours may be spotty. We also cannot guarantee that all schools will take advantage of this opportunity and work with the service learning institutes to set a program into place. A third limitation is that not all majors will be able to receive service learning credit through playing recess games with young students during lunch recess. This means that the number of service learners is going to be limited to only a few majors. Another possible concession is that service learners may meet their time requirements before the end of the semesters, so having a steady flow of service learners may be a challenge to overcome.

Potential Negative Outcomes

One potentially negative outcome is that students will begin to lose their sense of self creativity. What this means is that they will count on someone leading games, that they will forget how to create and lead their own. Having recess game leaders every day will surely draw a regular crowd of participants who depend on the game leaders for the structure and the consistency. This can become negative if students play with the activity leaders so often they become dependent, and cannot think to play games without activity leaders.

Conclusion

In conclusion we feel that action option 2, Partnering with service learners as lunch recess activity leaders, is the best option for addressing the lack of CLASP in the school environment. Option 2 addresses both the needs of the students by providing them with a lunch recess activity leaders, but it also addresses the needs of the college students that need to serve in their communities for credit. This option would come at the lowest cost to the actual school, which is paramount for accessibility to all schools. Even the lowest of the low-income school's could receive the full benefits of CLASP programs by simply requesting service learners. This is probably the most important aspect of our evaluation as many schools would rule out our idea on the basis of lack of funding. With service learners, once an agreement and plan is formed and negotiated with the service learning institutes of nearby colleges, the expenses are free. Service learners earn their volunteer hours, and students receive exposure to CLASP practices. This also addresses the positive role model theme brought up during our interview with Vice Principal Brown. Having college students positively engaging with the elementary students can act to inspire the young students to take their education more seriously with the hopes of one day going to college. Finally, we felt that option 2 would have the highest hopes for longevity. As more

and more Americans attend college, the amount of service learners will only increase linearly. This provides the biggest possibility that the role of lunch recess activity leaders will always be filled. With all of these things considered, we feel that the positive outcomes associated with option 2 completely outweigh the possible negative outcomes.

Action Documentation

What did we do?

After reviewing the literature, we determined that the best plan of action to take would be to implement and run a prototype program at Webster Elementary. We did not want to just propose our ideas, we wanted to prove to Webster that CLASP ideas really make a difference in improving the overall quality of life at school. As a group, we took on the role of lunch recess activity leaders. Our program was designed in a way to get students interacting cooperatively. Our main goal was to find students that needed a little bit of structure, and help them to have a blast and get moving during recess. We led a variety of games including but not limited to: Shipwreck, Kick Ball, Landmine Tag, Paper Airplane Competition, Variations of Basketball, Capture the Flag, and Shark's and Islands (the favorite game by a mile). These games and many more functioned to intrigue students and develop many motor skills. We taught students that it is fun to play by the rules, and it's fun to play structured games, with each other.

One of the biggest changes we made was to the rules of the games. We realized that not all grade levels can play games in the same way. As people learn differently, kids play differently. Some games were instantly favorites, but other games totally tanked. As lunch recess activity leaders we learned to always be on our toes as we can never expect when the vibe will change.

Another thing we had to learn to keep in mind is that preparation is key. The first day we went to the school we had only prepared one single game. We figured we would just play it all recess. This did work for the first day, but having a handful of games to choose from is crucial in success. We also found that mixing up the games keeps students both interested as well as excited to play.

Outcomes

We could not have anticipated the dire need for structure during recess. On paper, our idea sounded plausible, but every single day we led activities we were reminded of the importance and influence CLASP programs have on the students. We did not go one single day without students begging us to come more often. Due to schedule restrictions this was not possible, but the need for CLASP in schools is severe.

All outcomes were positive. Many students that played games with us regularly showed a great increase in positive behavior and teamwork. One student in particular would not play by the rules during the first day of games because he realized that breaking the rules got him more attention. By the last day of games that same student helped me to explain the rules of a game and worked to facilitate the game so that everyone was playing fairly. An additional outcome we noticed was that as the weeks went by, students began asking if they could lead familiar games. The growth in leadership was exponential week after week. It reached the point where we feel the games will still be played to a certain extent without us being there to truly lead them. The students that played with us all became much more engaged with each other and became much more sportsmanlike and cooperative.

Next steps

With what we know now, we know what must be done. We must act to pursue option 2 in the best way we possibly can. We feel that CLASP programs have the potential to bring a wave of benefits to all affected schools. The action we decided to take was to draft an email template. This template would serve as a beginning point for schools to apply our CLASP programs. The email template would begin the first step in the collaboration process between the school and a local college. This template would ask for service learners every semester and explain that credit will be awarded for time spent as lunch recess activity leaders. The template is as



Calling all service learners!

We are "Webster" Elementary, and we have some shoes to fill - athletic shoes to be exact.

We are looking to fill the position of Recess Coach, and would love to have you volunteer with us this semester!

The major responsibilities include: leading groups of elementary students in physically active games during lunch recess, planning and preparing for the games, and collaborating with administration.

The time commitment would include at least one day per week, 11:30am-1:30pm.

Please email ***** for more information.

Thank you!

follows:

We urge any and all viewers of this capstone to take the email template and send it to a school that you think would benefit from CLASP programs. Thank you.

Critical Reflection

This capstone has changed me. From this project, I learned that no change is effortless. Working to formulate our idea was a big obstacle in itself. The creative process is very unexpected and unreliable. We overcome this obstacle through community and the sharing of ideas and identification of need. The principal and vice principal recognized the need for structured physical activity, and helped us to develop our idea into a program. Working through our ideas with supportive individuals both solidified and reinforced the program and action that we came up with. I learned that I cannot possibly seek change by myself. Working with the community of Webster Elementary has revealed to me the critical influence of teamwork and support. I have realized the need for change is monumental. Although we only went to the school sight for a handful of recesses, I truly believe we made a positive impact on the students that played with us. As we found from our interviews, many of the students showed improved behavior, and the crazy recess environment was just slightly more under control. We would not go a single day without students asking us to come more often, unfortunately our schedules did not permit it. Rome wasn't built in a day. I truly have learned that change required the right people collectively pursuing improvement.

The Liberal Studies MLOs have been significant in my professional development. As a developing educator, I have learned not only how to interact and create a positive interpersonal connection with students, but I have learned that hard work pays off. Part of our title is a play on words that recognizes that participation in CLASP is a positive investment in a student's future.

Playing it forward will allow our students/children the opportunity to spend their recess time to engage in character building fun sports games. Overall this coursework has taught me to grow not only as a student/ aspiring teacher, but first and foremost as an involved member of the community. You can't do a capstone from your couch. We sure haven't. I have learned that you have to go out there, network a little, put your ideas into the minds of others, and hope something sticks. Making yourself vulnerable and optimistic are two traits that are paramount to this major. Teaching is not trial by error, it's trial by fire, and resilience is vital. I feel that I have become much more articulate over the course of the semester and I have learned to recognize the power of interpersonal collaboration.

There are a few necessary steps that I need to take in order to become the professional that I envision being. I need to get much better at elevator speeches. I struggle with narrowing down and concising my ideas. Talking with others and hearing their pitches has revealed to me this concept of streamlining. The next step I must take to further my professional development is to network. I need to get my name out there and show people what I am all about. I am all about positive change through physical activity and decisive action. I feel that as a teacher I will be able to reach out to kids and get them engaged in the world as well as get them involved in sports and physical activity. The biggest lack I see in the current generation is that people are slowing down, and playing less. I want to break this cycle anyway that I can.

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