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Natalie Wynne
California State University, Monterey Bay

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Your Body is Amazing: Teaching TK Students about Body Positivity

Natalie Wynne

California State University, Monterey Bay

Human Development and Family Studies Capstone Project

Introduction

Young children should learn about body positivity at a young age to prevent the negative thoughts of body image. They should learn to accept that they are different and to love their body no matter what anyone says. To educate young children about body positivity, I will have 3 activities for three lessons to teach the Transitional Kindergarten at Martin Luther King Jr. of the Arts in Seaside, CA about why they should love the bodies they were born in.

Need Statement

Body positivity is defined as loving the way your body looks on the outside and having the confidence to be in your skin. People should not compare themselves to their peers, or care about what others say about their bodies. Having a healthy body helps keep negative thoughts away and supports positive thoughts in mind. To keep their bodies strong and healthy, children should learn more about the need for physical activity. Physical activity has decreased in young children, which has led to overweight and obese children. Education children early about the positive effects of daily physical activity on the body can have a positive outcome into adulthood (Wiseman, Harries, & Lee, 2017). Bodies require at least 30 minutes of body movement every day. Daily exercise is often offered in preschools to help children move around, so they are not sitting for too long inside (Peden, Jones, Costa, Ellis, & Okely, 2017).

Young children benefit from daily exercise. Exercise helps keep children in good physical shape and decreases the risk of obesity (Janssen & LeBlanc, 2010). Most schools offer times during the day that is dedicated to exercise. Recesses throughout the day give students opportunities to exercise and have a break from sitting in their classrooms (Loprinzi, Cardinal, Loprinzi, & Lee, 2012). Schools also offer physical education during school, which may help

contribute daily exercise needed. In physical education activities, children play sports with their classmates, and it is less competitive than real sports teams (Loprinzi et al., 2012). However, physical education may not be enough exercise because children are not worked hard enough. Children may need a sport to add more to their daily exercise. When a child does not have any daily exercise, they become overweight, and it could lead to negative thoughts about their body or teasing.

Healthy eating can lead to a healthy body and development. Children having unhealthy eating habits while they are young can lead to interference in their development or growth (Taylor, Evers, & McKenna, 2005). For example, children may be at risk for developing Type 2 diabetes or a chronic disease when they are older if they do not take care of their bodies by eating healthy (Taylor et al. 2005). I will provide a 3-day lesson to the TK students at King Elementary on body positivity and healthy eating.

Theory Application

Bandura's Social Learning theory pertains to my project because children learn through observing other's behaviors and attitudes. Children model what their parents are eating for meals, so they end up eating the same way (Brown & Ogden, 2004). Parents may want their children to eat healthily, so they do not become obese at a young age. Since parents are the ones to purchase and prepare the food, children eat what is provided to them. On the other hand, parents might overeat fast food because they cannot afford to buy their children healthy, organic food since it is very expensive. I believe parents go to fast food because it is cheap and fast. Parents, also, might not have time to cook dinner or grocery shop because they work too much, so they stop at a fast food restaurant to grab dinner for the family. Since children may not know

what it means to eat healthily, I am going to teach them about foods they need to eat to produce a strong, happy body.

Consideration of Diversity

My project will be taking place in a Transitional Kindergarten classroom at Martin Luther King Jr. School of the Arts in Seaside, California. According to Public School review, in the 2015-2016 school year, the ethnic composition of King Elementary was 9% Asian, 82% Hispanic, 3% Black, 2% White, 2% Hawaiian, and 2% two or more races. It is likely that the participants will reflect the school's diversity. Also, 83% of the students at the school are eligible for a free lunch, and 11% of the students qualify for reduced lunch. The school offers breakfast as well for students who get free or reduced lunch. To be eligible for the free or reduced meals, parents have to fill out an application about their income level to see if they can have their children receive free food. There is a possibility the participants might not have access to healthy food for their breakfast or lunch at home. Since children receive food from school, they are getting food that is good for them.

Methods

Day 1

I went to the TK classroom and introduced myself. I told the students about my project and told them I would be reading them a book about how amazing our bodies are and body positivity. I read them a book called *Your Body is Awesome: Body Respect for Children* (Danielsdottier, 2014). I only read the first half to them because one half talks about why our bodies are amazing and the second half is about loving the body you were born in. While I was reading, I asked questions about the material I was reading (see Appendix A). After I finished reading the first half of the book, I had them get into a circle for an activity. The activity was for

the students to name something that makes their body amazing. My example was ‘My body is amazing because it helps me balance for Yoga’ (see Appendix A). After the activity, I had them come back to the rug to end the lesson by explaining why the topic was essential for them to learn about, and I wished I learned about it when I was their age.

Day 2

When I arrived at the classroom, I told the class to go to the rug to read the second half of the book I read the day before. Before I read the book, I reviewed with them what I read to them the day before. I wanted to see if they remembered and most of them did. Then I read the rest of the book to them. I asked them questions while I was reading the book to see if they were following along (see Appendix B). After I finished reading, I had them go to sit at their desks. The teacher and I handed out pieces of blank white paper. I told them they would be drawing a portrait of themselves. I did mine first as an example for them. While they were coloring, I walked around to see their drawings. After they finished their drawings, the teacher had each table group take a picture with me while holding their portraits. Once everyone was done with the pictures, I had them sit on the rug to discuss why it is okay to look different. Then I asked them questions on ways people can be different (see Appendix B). I ended the lesson by telling them that I have a hard time with body image. I am still working on loving my body and myself. I also said I wished I learned about body positivity at their age because it could have helped me with loving my body right now.

Day 3

I entered the classroom and had the students sit on the rug. I told them I would be reading them another book, which is called *My Amazing Body* (Thomas, 2002). While I read, I asked them the questions that were in the book to see if they were paying attention (see Appendix C).

A few knew how to answer the questions, but most of them did not understand. I had them sit at their desks to do an activity. The activity they did was to draw one healthy and one unhealthy food. I wanted to see if they understood the difference. I drew an example for them, which was an apple and candy. Once everyone was finished, they came back to the rug to discuss what they drew. Each student told the class what they drew and if they drew healthy foods. A majority of the students copied my example and did not think of their own. I reread the page from the book about eating to remind them. A few of the students drew their favorite foods like pizza, ice cream, or cake. I ended the lesson by telling them examples of healthy foods and unhealthy foods, and why bodies need healthy foods to live and grow.

Learning Outcomes

I provided two 20-minute lessons and one 40-minute lesson to the Transitional Kindergarten students at Martin Luther King Jr. School of the Arts. By the end of the lessons, the participants will:

1. Identify one or two reasons why they love their bodies
2. Identify one or two ways people or bodies can be different
3. Identify one healthy food and one unhealthy food

Results

Learning outcome 1 was that the students could name one or two things on why they think their bodies are amazing. The learning outcome was met. While I was reading the first book to them, I asked them questions in between readings. They understood the questions I was asking, and they understood the information I was reading. During the circle activity, most of the twenty students named the reasons why their bodies are amazing.

Learning outcome 2 was that they had to identify one or two ways people or bodies are different from each other. The learning outcome was not met. When I was reading the second part to the book, *Your Body is Awesome*, I asked questions about how people can look different, and four of the students could give answers. During the activity, most of the student's self-portraits looked like themselves, but there were a few drawings that did not look like anything close to a self-portrait.

Learning outcome 3 was that they had to identify one healthy food and one unhealthy food. The learning outcome was not met. I had them draw a picture of one healthy food and one unhealthy food. My example was an apple and candy. After they were done with their drawing, I had them sit on the rug. I had each student stand in front of the class and tell them what healthy food and unhealthy they drew. 17 out of 20 students copied my example and did not create their ideas. Most of the students did not understand the concepts of healthy and unhealthy foods. Some students thought healthy foods meant their favorite foods and unhealthy foods meant their least favorite foods.

Discussion

My project was unsuccessful because only one of my learning outcomes was met. The students were engaged in the books I read, and I could tell they enjoyed the books I read. I knew they were paying attention because they could answer the questions I asked about the reading material. After I was finished with the book, they seemed to forget what we discussed earlier. Bandura's social theory was consistent in the results because the majority of the students copied what I put for my example of the activity. They observed what I drew and copied. They did not think of creating their ideas. They did understand the concept of the reason why we should love

our bodies and what they can do because they could name reasons that were not the same as my example.

For diversity, my project included everyone who wanted to learn about body positivity. Teaching children about positive body image at a young age helps them learn to love their bodies when they are older. Most cultures, I assume, are okay with having their children learn about the topic to teach them no bodies are better than others.

Some changes I would make if I did this project again would be to use a slightly older audience, maybe 2nd to 4th grade, because that is usually the time children believe one body is better than the other. I would also go into more detail on the healthy food and unhealthy food portion because I feel like I did not explain it as well as I could to the TK class. I should do more research on the subject before I try to explain it to children. I would change how long my sessions were because they were too short and I think I could have used an hour for the second and third day. Even though my project did not work out like I thought it would, the children did learn to love their bodies no matter what.

Resources:

- Janssen, I. & LeBlanc, A.G. (2010). Systematic review of the health benefits of physical activity and fitness in school-aged children and youth. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 7:40, 1-16.
- Loprinzi, P.D., Cardinal, B.J., Loprinzi, K.L., & Lee, H. (2012). Benefits and environmental determinants of physical activity in children and adolescents. *The European Journal of Obesity*, 5, 597-610.
- Peden, M.E., Jones, R., Costa, S., Ellis, Y., & Okely, A.D. (2017). Relationship between children's physical activity, sedentary behavior, and childcare environments: A cross sectional study. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 6, 171-176.
- Taylor, J.P., Evers, S., & McKenna, M. (2015). Determinants of healthy eating in children and youth. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 96, 20-26.
- Wiseman, N., Harris, N., & Lee, P. (2016). Lifestyle knowledge and preferences in preschool children: Evaluation of the *Get up and Grow* healthy lifestyle education programme. *Health Educational Journal*, 75(8) 10, 1012-1017.

Appendix A

Questions I asked the class:

1. Who can remember what amazing things are bodies can do?
 - a. Answer: play baseball, play soccer, play on the playground, jump rope, swinging on monkey bars, and swimming in pools
2. How are our bodies so smart?
 - a. Answers: They send us feelings when we are hungry, full, tired, rested, and sick

Appendix B

Questions for the class:

1. How can two people look different?
 - a. Answers: different eye color, different hair color, different skin color
2. Is it okay to be different from each other?
 - a. Answer: Yes
3. Is it better to be big or thin?
 - a. Answer: Both is good

Appendix C

Question I asked the class:

1. What different things can you think of that help keep you body healthy?
 - a. Answers: sleep, eat food, drink water, and play

2. What is your favorite way to move your body?
 - a. Answers: jumping, running, soccer, baseball, and swimming

Appendix D Presentation Slides



Your Body is Amazing: Teaching Body Positivity to TK Students

By Natalie Wynne

Need Statement

- Body positivity is defined as loving the way your body looks
- It is also feeling comfortable and confident in your own skin
- You should not punish yourself for how you look on the outside
- It is important to learn about body positivity at an early age
- Children should learn that it is okay to be different because it is better to be yourself than be like everyone else and to be proud of who you are

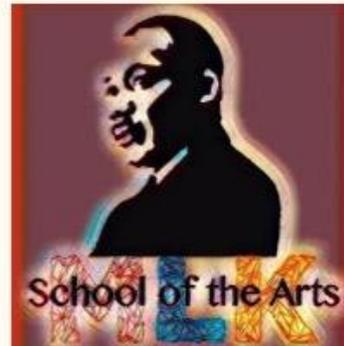


Bandura's Social Learning Theory

- Children learn through observing their peers behaviors or attitudes towards different body types
 - Positive attitudes consists of praising and admiring
 - Negative attitudes consists of teasing or bullying
 - Children observe their peers bullying a student that has a bigger body type
 - They observe peers with thinner bodies are not targets
 - When they are older, they learn from observing media and society that it is better to be thin than fat
-

Participants

- School: Martin Luther King Jr. School of the Arts
- Location: Seaside, California
- Transitional Kindergarten class
- 20 students
- Ages: 4 ½ to 5 years old



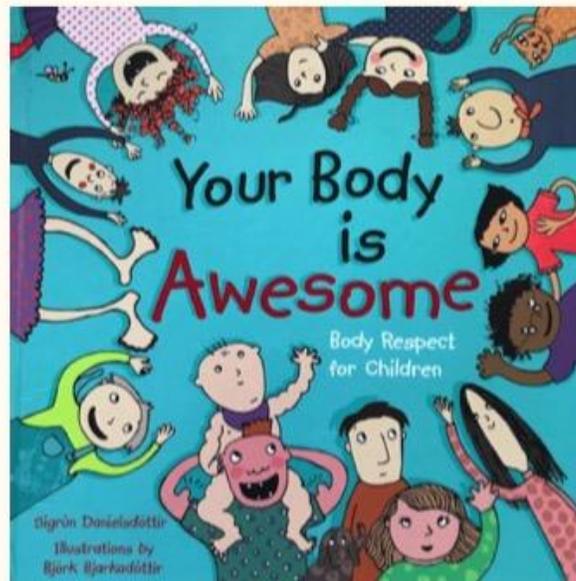
Learning Outcomes

By the end of my lessons, the students will:

1. Name two reasons why they should love their bodies
 2. Identify two ways people or bodies can be different
 3. Identify one healthy food and one unhealthy food
-

Day #1

- 20 minute session
- I read the first half of book called, *Your Body is Awesome: Body Respect for Children*
 - Asked questions while reading to see if they were following
- Activity: Circle Game
 - I had them get up and stand in a circle on the rug
 - I had them go around and name reasons why they love their bodies
 - I love my body because...



Day #1 Results

- LO#1- Name two reasons why we should love our bodies
 - It was met because they named different reasons why they love their bodies
 - They named amazing things their bodies allow them to do
 - Some examples of answers were playing jump rope, playing soccer, playing baseball, dancing, running, and swimming
 - They love that their bodies can help them play their favorite activities
-

Day #2

- 40 minute session
- I read the second half of *Your Body is Awesome*
- I asked them to name reasons how people or bodies can be different
- I gave them the example of different hair color or different height
- They did not understand and some copied the example I gave
- Activity: Drawing portraits of themselves and discussing in their classmates.



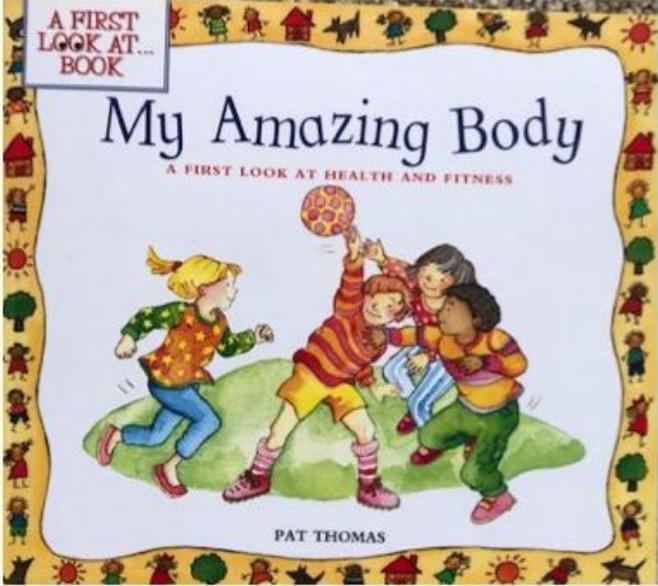
Day #2 Results

- LO#2: Identify two ways people or bodies can be different
 - It was not met because some of the students did not draw their self-portrait and they could not identify how peers look different from each other
 - 12 out of the 20 students drew self-portraits, but the other 8 drew portraits that did not look like themselves
 - 5 of the students copied my example of a self-portrait
 - 4 students named reasons why people can be different
-



Day #3

- 30 minute session
 - First, I reviewed the topic on why we should love how our bodies the way they are
 - I read another book called, *My Amazing Body*
 - Had similar topics as the first book I read
 - We discussed what foods help our bodies stay healthy, happy, and strong like fruit and vegetables and foods that do not make our bodies healthy like candy and ice cream
 - Activity: Drawing healthy and unhealthy food
 - I had them draw one healthy food and one unhealthy food
-



Day #3 Results

- LO#3-Identify one healthy food and one unhealthy food
- It was met unsuccessfully because they did not understand the differences between healthy and unhealthy foods
- 17 out of 20 students copied my example, which was an apple and candy
- 3 out of 20 students drew two of their favorite foods



Discussion

- Project was unsuccessful because only the first learning outcome was met
 - Students named reasons why they think their bodies are amazing and loved answering
 - They did not understand why bodies can be different
 - They did not understand the differences between healthy and unhealthy food
 - For the next time, I would use any grade between 1st and 4th grade
 - Have hour long sessions, so I can go more into detail about the reasons why our bodies need healthy food and how bodies can be different
-



Thank You! Questions?

Your Body is Amazing: Teaching Body
Positivity to TK Students

Natalie Wynne

