

5-2019

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Benefits of Integrating Physical Activities into the Elementary Classroom

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Benefits of Integrating Physical Activities

Abstract

There have been significant studies stating that physical activities have been eliminated for elementary school students. Today students are expected to attend school for approximately eight hours, five days out of the week. This senior capstone paper examines the many benefits of integrating physical activities into the elementary classroom through the use of literature review, anonymous-survey of twenty two students, and anonymous-survey of four teachers. This means that kinesthetic learning style has been limited for students at the elementary school level. The results indicate that integrating physical activities into the elementary classroom is proven to be beneficial to the overall physical well-being, mental health, and academic performance of students. Teachers who choose to advocate and promote the benefits of physical activities, will strongly increase the chances of students living a longer and healthier life.

Keywords: students, physical activities, well-being, academic performance, classroom

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Introduction/Background

Elementary school's do not offer nor implement physical activity inside the classroom for students. Elementary school students have many types of learning styles and therefore should be able to experience every available opportunity. With that said, schools and teachers should not limit nor exclude the many learning styles available to all students due to personal bias on physical activity itself. Apart from having our children attend school and wishing for them to succeed as best they can, there is another vital factor that is not being highly considered. That vital factor we should value and highly consider is our children's overall well-being. A student's overall well-being includes their health state and mental health. Physical activity will not only ensure higher academic scores on exams but it will also promote and motivate students to become more aware of their health state. Throughout my research paper, I plan on proving that physical activities involving physical movement is a keen necessity and significant value towards benefiting a student's overall academic performance.

Obesity and diabetes rates are very high now days. According to the State of Obesity (2018), Higher obesity and diabetes rates are being specifically seen towards the younger children age group. With the help of physical activities inside the classroom, teachers can help serve as role models to guide students in the right direction of knowing how to become healthier overall. In the end not only do students benefit from the integration of physical activities in the classroom but parents will also become more aware of where their child's overall well-being stands. Integrating physical activities into the classroom will raise students' knowledge of learning that with the opportunity of being able to physically move in the classroom will help ensure for a longer healthier life. Therefore, the integration of physical activities inside the

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elementary classroom will also help gear parents towards becoming more involved and concerned with knowing about their child's overall learning experience at school.

According to Lorson, Lyon, Minoughan and Orłowski (2010), besides the potential health benefits physical activity contributes to, physical activity can also be implemented to improve mood, energy level, and student learning. Within the last three decades, there has been a huge increase in the amount of inactivity children demonstrate today in our modernized society.

Another important event that occurred in 2008 was called the "*No Child Left Behind*" legislation. This bill ultimately led to school budget cuts that not only made it difficult for teachers to have the adequate supplies to provide physical activity inside the classrooms, but students have also had to endure being a part of an educational school system that does not allow them to seek all of their possible learning styles. According to Jenkins, Mulrine and Prater (2008), exercise increases attention to cognitive tasks and can help boost academic performance. In addition, Preventive Medicine (2015) also found that physical activity breaks can increase students' focus and can also improve students' classroom behavior. While physical activity inside the classroom may not seem as a priority for many teachers today, it does have a long lasting effect throughout a student's' entire life.

The purpose for this senior capstone research paper is to analyze and carefully evaluate the outcomes of physical activities on an elementary school student's academic performance in the classroom. It will also subtly discuss the advantages teachers have when integrating physical activities into their everyday scheduled routines at the elementary school level. I will also include a list of teaching techniques, methods, and resources that can be of use by any educator seeking to implement physical movement inside their classroom. The great amount of research, theories, facts, and statistics provided also states helpful information on teacher effectiveness

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when beginning to enter the educator profession. Educators will also be aware and knowledgeable before attempting to overcome any roadblock they may face when incorporating physical activities into their classroom. This research paper initial purpose is to reveal the endless amounts of teaching possibilities, tactics, and flexible approaches educators have when integrating physical activities into the classroom. The ultimate objective this research paper aims for is, the recognition of acknowledging that by integrating physical activities into the classroom comes with the advocacy of the benefits of having a healthy body, mind, and soul altogether. This will impact both students and teachers lives immensely.

The primary question to my research paper is: *How does integrating physical activities into the classroom benefit elementary school students?* Some secondary questions I plan to seek the answers to are: *What does research say about the benefits of physical activities for elementary school students, if so what are they? How can educators implement physical activity movement in their classroom? Lastly, Are there resources available for educators to know how to properly implement physical activities into their classroom?*

Literature Review

I will provide an introductory explaining what is to be expected in this section. In this section I will provide research I have found in relevance to my introduction and background section. For example, I will be discussing health related conditions students can face when not being physically active daily. I will also emphasize how an elementary school symbolizes the power to dictate how elementary school students lives will look like in the future. I will discuss the outcomes physical activities have on an elementary school student's academic performance in the classroom. I will provide research information on the pros, cons from a teachers point of view, and cons from a students point of view when integrating physical activities into the

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classroom. In this section the audience will read the many reasons explaining how and why the integration of physical activities in the classroom has so many bonus benefits towards an elementary school student. Changing the school learning experiences back to students being able to learn through the use of movement in class, will definitely benefit not only the student but teachers instruction in the classroom as well.

First of all, Basch (2010) found that health is a vital factor in a child's ability to learn (p. 250). Schools are vital because that is where students spend the vast majority of their time in their everyday lives. Therefore, it might be the only place where health inequities can be addressed. If children's basic health needs are not met, they will struggle to learn regardless of the effectiveness of instructional materials used inside the classroom (Cook & Khol, 2013). To highlight these effects, Cook & Khol (2013) found the following: Schools may be the only place where health inequities can be addressed, if children's basic health needs are not met, they will struggle to learn regardless of the effectiveness of instructional materials used. Studies report that up to 91 percent of American children have poor diets and less than half get the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity (State of Obesity, 2018). There has been a growing movement to reduce recess time in exchange for more time spent in the classroom, the idea was that this would ultimately result an improvement in academic performance. Unfortunately, that decision only leads to a decrease in the opportunities for students to engage their learning through physical activity. According to the State of Obesity (2018), Childhood obesity can have various deleterious effects on the well-being of a child. For instance, obese children are put at an increased risk of being bullied and suffering from depression. In contrast, a healthy diet and along with a physically active lifestyle in childhood is associated with better mental health (State of Obesity, 2018 para. 4). In turn, children are limiting their learning

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capabilities and are increasingly being exposed to becoming obese, due to the lack of physical activity.

O’Leary et al. (2011) states that just a single bout of moderate-intensity physical activity exercises can improve performance on a task of attention and retain information better. Simply, children who are in shape and exercise everyday will allocate greater resources to a given task and demonstrate less dependency on environmental cues or teacher prompting (Erwin, 2012). Ford (2016) found that physical activity enhanced cognitive performance for a given attention task. In addition, Erwin (2012) studies show that children who participated in energizers took more steps during the school day than those who did not. Students also increased their on-task behaviors by more than 20% over baseline measures (p. 268). Overall, Erwin (2012) points out that physical activity lessons incorporated into the classroom can increase time on task and improve focus towards being on task inside a classroom setting. Erwin (2012) goes on to note, “Cognitive tasks completed before, during, and after physical activity demonstrate effects that were always positive in comparison to sedentary behavior” (p. 267).

Within the last three decades, there has been a huge increase in the amount of inactivity children demonstrate today in our modernized society (Lochbaum, 2008). De La Cruz (2017) puts it best by stating that as adults, that we need to recognize that children are movement-based, and that by asking children to sit still and be quiet all day may actually be going against human nature (para. 2) According to Shoval et al. (2014) show that students find movement activities more enjoyable, engaging, and fun than just sitting still all day. When physical activity is used as a break from academic learning time, post engagement effects demonstrate more effective focus (Bartholomew & Jowers, 2011). In addition, De La Cruz (2017) found that active time can be used to energize your brain and make all those moments sitting still better or more productive

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(para. 3). It's simple, if children are more active they will demonstrate the following qualities in their school experience: greater attention, faster cognitive processing speed, and score higher on standardized academic tests in comparison to children who are not active (De La Cruz, 2017). Students need to know that their learning experience will be met with limitless opportunities, to be able to explore what style of learning best benefits their needs.

According to Mulrine, Prater and Jenkins (2008), we need to move back to cultivation a classroom environment where students are able to release excess energy and become more engaged in their learning (p. 291). Through the use of movement and learning, students demonstrated a huge interest in being able to learn through movement instead of sitting in a chair all day (Shoval et al., 2014). Active environments demonstrate positive changes in student classroom behavior, word recognition, reading fluency, math scores, time on task, and concentration levels (para. 3). Physical educators have a significant role in shaping the habits of student because they will encourage the activities amongst students. They also encourage and promote movement for the entire school to “get moving”. Physical educators can also help by furthering the knowledge and skills classroom teachers need to promote physical activity amongst their students’ (Orlowski, 2013). According to Lorson (2013), being in a moving classroom, allows for teachers to easily modify daily tasks, transitions, and routines that still involve or enhance physical activity. Lyon (2013) stated that subject transitions like standing in line can easily implement physical activity just by changing it to students marching in place or stretching (p. 51). Although many teachers have their doubts towards not devoting time inside the classroom for physical activity, breaks and integrated lessons can allow these to be essentially connected to one another. For example, activity breaks introduce specific movements

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or activities that establish routines and behaviors that can be beneficial and conducive to an academic learning environment (Lyon, 2013).

According to Cook and Khol (2013), a valuable predictor of student performance is a parent having clear expectations for their child's academic success. Attendance is another factor that can have a significant impact on academic performance. Parent involvement in students' attendance is considered to be another valuable predictor. Family and community engagement in school-based physical activity programs provides numerous benefits (para. 6). For instance, The Shape of America (2017) found the following: When families are active together, they spend additional time together and experience health benefits (para. 6).

Abdelbary (2017) stated the following: "I have supported teachers by teaching them how to use media in the classroom for breaks. YouTube is a great resource for finding videos to guide movement breaks and exercises. Teachers can also allow for free dance or movement periods during their classes" (para. 12). Teachers can provide endless opportunities that allow children to be more active just by setting ground rules for play, making learning activities more active, encouraging periodic breaks, and something as simple taking midday walks (Abdelbary, 2017). Teachers complain or hesitate to offer physical activity inside the classroom because they have lack of experience or necessary material in order to have an effective learning outcome for their students. Training teachers can either be done by simply providing ideas and feedback from their collaborations with their colleagues. Another method can be done by teachers using their own creative and innovative ideas to form lesson plans involving physical activities. By following these simple recommendations, teachers will make a tremendous positive impact on their students overall academic success. There isn't much training needed, teachers can do it and learn as they go. These are two very easy and flexible free methods of using the internet to promote

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physical activity in the classroom. For example, there are free apps available on iPad, tablets, the use of the internet like YouTube videos, and another great website that is very effective is called Go Noodle (also a resource referenced in Appendix 3). Go Noodle (see in Appendix 3)

I will provide a list of vital reasons as what the pros are of integrating physical activities in the classroom. For instance, “The pros to integrating physical activities into the elementary classroom are as follows: daily participation in any type of physical activity can prevent health-related issues (ex: obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease), students will alleviate any built up anxiety, students will release and reduce any built up stress, a huge increase is seen in a student’s learning, test scores and academic success, students will have a higher self-esteem, students will have higher confidence levels (ex: leadership skills), students will have higher attentiveness levels, students will feel less overwhelmed when learning in an enjoyable, comforting environment (ex: the integration of physical activities in the classroom will provide this kind of environment for elementary school students), students solve problems with fewer mistakes and show full completion of tasks when participating in physical activity breaks.”

I also would like to state that I did not find much research identifying cons towards my capstone research title but I did find these negative misconceptions many teachers had on the integration of physical activities into their classroom. I will now discuss the cons from a teacher’s point of view, and cons from a students point of view when integrating physical activities into the classroom. The cons of integrating physical activities from a teacher’s point of view are as follows: It is unnecessary or irrelevant, time consuming and not as important as other core subjects (ex: Math, Reading, or Language Arts), not a vital factor that is beneficial for a student to improve on their overall academic performance, and lastly teacher’s are not easily convinced as to how can physical activities actually have a relationship with the improvement

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towards a student's academic performance. Teachers were convinced that by allowing students to get up out of their seats, would only cause further class disruptions and cause students to be further off-task instead of being on-task and focused during class instructions. Now, the cons of integrating physical activities into the classroom from a student's point of view explains that students who are obese, have diabetes, facing any other health conditions, or just the disinterest of not wanting to participate in any activities related to being physically active are all contributing factors to feeling like they rather not engage at all. For example, if a student is obese or not athletic at all might feel more discouraged and ashamed because the other students around them perhaps are healthier or more physically active than they are. Again, students who are not physically active whatsoever and are asked to participate in a class activity involving physical activity will see that their classroom peers whom do not have health related conditions and are physically active daily will be more than enough to confirm why students would rather not be involved at all.

Altogether, teachers need to most importantly realize how easy, flexible and non-time consuming it is to implement or incorporate physical activity into other academic lessons. Physical activities and brain breaks can last anywhere from five to twenty minutes maximum. These fun, exciting, engaging, and productive physical activity integrated lesson plans will benefit students' daily behaviors inside the classroom. This implementation will lead students to have a higher increase in proficient scores and exams. Therefore, teachers can easily modify, and expand the physical activity to integrate into any academic content-area objectives and lessons. There is no excuse teachers can give, towards not allowing physical activity as part of the curriculum's students learn inside the classroom. Active academic lessons are found to add interest and motivation to the learning process, causing children to engage more fully with the

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content presented. Activity breaks and integrated lessons are correlated to one another. The classroom is meant to be a safe place where children can come to learn, grow, and have their strengths fostered. With that being said, why not give elementary school students the opportunity to experience the limitless advantageous benefits physical activities have?

Methods and Procedures

Throughout my duration of time and entering of my final semester here at California State University Monterey Bay, it was difficult and somewhat frightening on knowing what I planned on choosing to research for my capstone research paper. What continues to amaze and excite me is knowing that I will be entering a profession that has many valuable areas needing support and attention. After taking Physical Activity in the Classroom course, I was further concerned and interested in pursuing more research on a topic in relation to physical activity. It is my goal that as a future educator I advocate that physical activities in the classroom is a necessity for all students to thrive and succeed throughout their academic journey. After proposing my interest and ideas in a topic related to physical activity to Dr. Thao, he then gave me the okay to begin my research process.

In this paragraph I will give an explanation as to who the population consists of, why I have selected this population, and what materials I used throughout the conduction of this research study. The population in my study consists of four elementary school teachers and twenty-two elementary students. I have selected this population because I am focusing on the benefits of integrating physical activities into the elementary classroom. Therefore, collecting data from these two subjects is extremely vital and has a significant relevance towards my results and findings for my senior capstone research title. The materials I used in this research study

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consist of the following: anonymously surveying teachers via email, anonymously surveying students, researching online peer reviewed journals and articles.

My plan from the start was to without a doubt anonymously survey teachers (see Appendix 1), and elementary school students (see Appendix 2) to present as much vital data in my research paper as I can. While I have researched limitless peer reviewed journals and articles related to my capstone title, being able to receive feedback from different subjects is an actual key contributing factor. Meaning, that I do believe that by collecting data from teachers and students well give a unique perspective on my searching of answering my research questions. This primary reason is why I decided to anonymously survey these two subjects. This approach will help me answer my research questions, because I believe it is much more comforting for people to answer the proposed questions as honest as possible. Having the ease relief of knowing they may answer these questions genuinely brings more value and accuracy. I chose to survey elementary school students because they deserve to be heard, acknowledged, and valued. Students need to be given their place of recognition at the elementary school level and have any of their voiced concerns taken into consideration seriously. Since students spend the majority of their time in a classroom I thought it would be extremely viable to include their feedback. Therefore, as a future educator I strongly believe that an elementary school students inputs should be valued and considered at all times no matter what. I also decided to survey teachers because their feedback is just as meaningful as a student. Receiving feedback from teachers is a contributing factor to my research paper because they are in the classroom with their students daily. Teachers are aware of their surroundings and know their students best. Altogether, both surveys are intended to receive personal perspectives and a variety of different insight's as to how each person feels towards the idea of integrating physical activities into their classroom.

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The great advantage of having teachers' and students' answer my survey questions is being able to hear two complete different perspectives. As I stated above earlier, apart from receiving feedback from teachers and students I also reviewed many peer-reviewed scholarly articles through our library search available online in order to further answer my primary and secondary research questions.

To sum it all up, these methods I used to further answer my research questions was indeed highly purposeful and helpful. Again, having retrieved completed responses from teachers and students surveys made an immense impact on the finalization of gathering effective information towards my research paper. Retrieving research online was also another important contribution to answering my primary and secondary research questions. Surveying teachers and students gave me the opportunity to retrieve insightful feedback that was of valuable use in writing my research paper. I also believe that after answering these questions both teachers and students will further understand the benefits as to how physical activities in the classroom are indeed beneficial.

Results and Findings

Completing the necessary methods and procedures I have created, has lead me to discover the revealing answers towards the research questions I have proposed. Receiving survey responses back from both teachers and students made an immense significance towards the vital information I have provided in this section. Therefore, In this section I will provide the results and findings from the teacher and student survey responses I have collected. The survey response population consists of four elementary school teachers and twenty-two elementary school students. In this section my discussion will also reveal the answers to my primary and secondary questions. The primary and secondary questions provided down below are italicized and

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developed into subsequent paragraphs. My primary and secondary questions are answered individually (separated into their own subsequent paragraphs) through the extensive research and accurate information I have collected from the survey responses (online research and fieldwork data).

How does integrating physical activities into the classroom benefit elementary school students?

When physical activity is used as a break from academic learning time, post engagement effects demonstrate more effective focus (Bartholomew & Jowers, 2011). In today's society the norm is to have students sit in their chairs for about 8 hours every day. Further evidence reassures that taking subtle activity breaks during the day helps children learn, and be more focused in class (De La Cruz, 2017). Research states that students first impression on participating in physical activity was seen as a choice rather than as a required task to be expected to complete by their teacher. When presented with activity breaks students showed more excitement and relief with the change of pace in the classroom (Camahalan & Ipock, 2015). With the implementation of physical activities inside the classroom, students were seen smiling and more content. Students were also more excited and enthusiastic when asked to stand up for physical activity breaks (Camahalan & Ipock, 2015). Research also demonstrated that during learning in-class activities students were seen being more productive in their work, demonstrated calmness and relaxation. In addition, my findings show that when teachers walked around the classroom, noticed their students reacted positively to the movement breaks (Morgan & Hansen, 2017). According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (2010), a part from physical activities providing health benefits, it also is an instructional tool all teachers can

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use to improve mood, energy level, and student learning. Active environments demonstrate positive changes in student classroom behavior, word recognition, reading fluency, math scores, time on task, and concentration levels (para. 3).

My anonymous survey results from teachers demonstrated that they do believe that physical activities are necessary for elementary school students to succeed in the classroom. They agree that by incorporating motion to concepts being taught does help students make connections and retain the information given. The surveys from teachers also showed that yes, they think the integration of physical activities benefits a student's learning. The anonymous teachers stated the following, "Students respond well to getting out of their seats and moving around throughout lessons." Teachers from the surveys also expressed, "Incorporating ways for students to get up and get moving throughout the day helps students maintain focus and stay engaged throughout lessons." The majority of the teacher surveys I have collected indicate that they do believe that by matching movements to concepts helps students internalize the material being taught better and helps them recall their ideas later. My result findings also indicate that more than seventy-five percent of the teacher surveys do incorporate physical activities into their curriculum despite budget cuts and decrease recess time. When asked what are the potential benefits of integrating physical activities at the elementary school level, teachers majority responses stated, "One benefit for one is that the school day is already long as it is and the recess time does not offer enough time for students to truly get all of their jitters out. Another benefit is that teachers have the flexibility of incorporating many different ways for students to get up and get moving throughout the day. Another valuable benefit is that physical activities inside the classroom helps students maintain better focus and stay engaged throughout lessons." My result findings also reveal that teachers do not believe that there are consequences to including physical

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education activities into their classroom curriculum. Instead the teacher surveys responses stated similarly to the following, “The less movement students are given/have, the more behavioral problems we encounter and have to deal with. We find that the more opportunities students are given to move around, the more focused and engaged they are. If we expect them to sit still for more than 20 minutes, it is certain that students will more than likely lose their focus which will then most likely distract the rest of the class from concentrating. In addition, we will also then be decreasing time from our teaching instruction because we are having to put our focus and energy on refocusing the entire class.” Overall, my findings indicate that teachers agree and believe that when students are moving more, they have more opportunities to retain the information given in different ways. Lastly, but certainly not least all four teachers I anonymously surveyed stated they would all advocate for the inclusion of physical education activities to be embedded back into their curriculum and classrooms. After receiving all final results from the teacher surveys I have collected, there is proof that all four teachers do agree that the integration of physical activities in the classroom benefits a student’s learning.

What does research say about the benefits of physical activities for elementary school students?

To begin with, I’d like to start off by saying that there is endless amounts of evidence proving that the implementation of physical activities are extremely beneficial for all elementary school students. Hilman et al. & Pontifex et al. (2012) found the following: Single sessions or bouts of physical activity have independent merit; it offers immediate benefits that enhance the learning experience. Single bouts of physical activity result in improved attention (p. 265). Ford (2016) found that physical activity enhanced cognitive performance for a given attention task.

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Apart from physical activities providing health benefits, it also benefits students cognitive performance, memory, and attentive functions that all support learning. With that said research justifies the following, “Executive function and brain health underlie academic performance. Cognitive functions related to attention or memory, are what facilitate learning. Those functions are enhanced by physical activity and higher aerobic fitness (p. 250). Research implies that physical activity has a direct relationship with brain stimulations that helps improve one’s own cognition and memory.

In addition, they were able to show that children who participated in energizers took more steps throughout the school day than those who did not. Research also demonstrates that students also increased their on-task behaviors by more than twenty percent. Another benefit research determines, is that physical activity lessons can increase time on task and improve focus towards being on task inside a classroom setting (Ford, 2016). My results collected from the teacher surveys verify that they do agree and believe that by implementing physical activities does have benefits towards elementary school students. The results from the teacher surveys also determine that eighty percent recognized that the less amount of movement their students have, the more behavior problems they have to deal with daily in their classrooms.

It is important to recognize that the implementation of physical activity before and after school provides more opportunities for all students, including those with special needs. If there is physical activity before and after school, research implies that younger generations will carry on this habit of exercising daily onto their future lives as adults. Therefore, any kind of physical activities provided can be for any elementary school student. Another benefit of physical activities is that there is no limitations or exclusions. Any elementary school student can be included and participate when engaging in any kind of physical activity. Research demonstrates

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that by having no limits or exclusions, there is a higher increase in all elementary school students being better prepared for learning any type of instruction. Having inclusivity is a major bonus and gainful benefit physical activities have towards elementary school students.

Kibbie (2011) states that students solve problems with fewer mistakes and show full completion of tasks when taking physical activity breaks. Taking physical activity breaks makes an immense increase in a student's learning and academic success. In addition, students felt more calm and said their bodies were more rested during problem solving (Camahalan & Ipock, 2015). With physical activity breaks, students not only learn empathy by sharing with others, they also benefit by building up their self-esteem and leadership skills by working in teams as well (Abdelbary, 2017). Overall, with the amount of research and surveys results I have collected all pinpoint that by teachers role modeling that exercising every day at the start of a young age can significantly improve the prevention of getting any health related diseases and issues in the future. The important message to take away here is that if students are participating in any type of physical activity regularly, this can prevent the following health-related issues such as: obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and in some severe cases cancer as well. Research also indicates that students will feel more relief, alleviate built up anxiety, less stressed, higher self-esteem, higher confidence levels, higher attentiveness and not feel overwhelmed when learning in an enjoyable comforting environment. Research provides evidence that a student's brain who is sitting down for twenty minutes long taking a test quietly shows indications of low brain activities. Whereas, a student who takes a brain break after twenty minutes and participates in some sort of physical activity shows higher levels of active brain activity. Most importantly, the surveys I have collected from both teachers and students affirm that they do believe physical activities are indeed very beneficial in relation to academic success.

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How can educators implement physical activity movement in their classroom?

Although teachers are not considered to be physical activity experts, they are not excluded to being capable of providing opportunities to implement and instruct a physically active classroom environment for their students' (Kibbe et al., 2011). What does permission for physical movement mean? This means that students are allowed to participate in any action involving moving around and moving their bodies around. This is considered to be a mode of physical activity. There are abundant amounts of activities teachers can adapt into their daily schedules in their classrooms, to encourage physical movement. Completing my field work through surveying teachers gave me many diverse ideas as to how to integrate physical activities, involving movement in their classroom. Studies show that if teachers implement breaks involving activities through movement regularly into their daily classroom schedule, that effect on students will be very beneficial and advantageous. The result of having these activity breaks, is that students will have the opportunity to experience being able to get up and move out of their seats. This will excite students and they will look forward to being able to get up and move instead of just sitting in a chair all day. Research and my anonymous surveys from the students all express a majority vote of over eighty-five percent believe that learning in a classroom environment through physical movement activities makes the learning process a lot more fun, exciting, and intriguing. The anonymous surveys from students expressed that over eighty percent have an interest in being in a classroom where their teacher allows for physical activities and movement out of their seats. Teachers can also incorporate the use of movement when transitioning into different periods. For example, when students need to transition into centers, stations, and walk in a straight line to the bathroom allowing them to do a movement of some sort has advantages. This will help students stay focused, help prevent any interruptions, and

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unnecessary commotions. When performing any activity involving movement, teachers will describe beforehand specific directions, rules, and type of exercises for students to follow. For example, teachers can have students sing *The Ants Go Marching One by One* and instruct them to march like soldiers with their hands to their sides. Students are more intrigued to sing along to the song and focused on marching to the step of the beat. This helps as I stated before helps avoid any unwanted disturbances or inappropriate behavior. Another example teachers can use for transitioning from one station to another, is by having students do a different kind of exercise. Such as marching, hopping, lunging, or tip toeing. Another example is a teacher involving physical movement with a math activity lesson. For students learning how to add and subtract can learn this concept through the help of a physical activity involving movement. The teacher would need scotch tape, a sharpie, numbered cards (zero to ten), flashcards with addition and subtraction math equations. Teacher can use an open space area in the classroom to create a number line numbered from zero to ten. Teacher will then pair students up into twos or more per number line that is displayed by the teacher in the classroom. For example if the student's flash card has two plus two, the student would start on the number two, and hop up two numbers stating the answer is equal to four. This just goes to show that teachers can easily combine any subject they desire. They can create ideas on their own or follow examples of physical activities that are already available to reference/use. The process is flexible and demonstrates that any activity can be easily implemented. See Appendix 3 to view a list of variety physical activities, games, movement, and brain break exercises.

Are there resources available for educators to know how to properly implement physical activities into their classroom?

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As Petray & Hill (2009) found, students will spend more time in the classroom than in any other school setting or environment. The classroom teacher plays a critical role in constructing an activity-friendly environment for active students to participate in (p. 47). As I discussed in the Literature Review section, although teachers and schools are not entirely responsible for students who have obesity; it is not wrongdoing or impossible to make a difference in helping students live a longer healthier lifestyle. With that said, there are many resources, references, and endless amount of activities involving physical movement teachers can implement physical activities into their classroom. Teachers themselves can also use their own creative and innovative ideas that are just as successful. In addition to all these methods teachers can use to effectively implement into their classrooms, they can also have their students improve their participation in daily physical activities called “brain breaks.” Brain breaks can last from one, five, ten or twenty minutes maximum. These brain breaks concentrate gearing students to become more calmer, focused, and complement’s mental energy as well. Research states that brain breaks benefit students to unwind and think more clearer when returning to work on assigned assignments afterwards. These brain breaks allow teachers to choose if they’d prefer involving physical activities that follow some form of academic instruction, it can also focus on not involving instruction but instead solemnly movement. Overall there are countless resources that can be accessed online (bonus it that many activities are for free), resources in the library (textbooks focusing on how to implement physical activity and movement in the classroom), creative, innovativeness, and collaborative ideas from other teachers as well. The implementation of how to properly implement physical activities is doable and very flexible for teachers to achieve, if desired to do so. Please see Appendix 3 to view a list of examples teachers can use as references.

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Discussion

I believe that all students should have the opportunity to physically move around in the classroom and experience the many advantageous benefits that come along with it. With that said, going to elementary schools as a student volunteer allowed me to realize that the public school system has changed immensely. I have also seen how elementary school teachers today follow certain rules, ideologies, and misconceptions that are based upon a student's learning outcomes. An elementary school student's classroom setting and greatest importance have changed drastically. For example, many teachers follow this misconception of, "one size fits all." Teachers need to quickly realize that every student is different and therefore learn differently too. All students should have the chance to explore all types of learning styles that best suits their needs. This misconception has translated into the budget cuts that eliminated subject areas (in this case Physical Education is the area being affected) teachers thought were a waste, unnecessary, and not nearly as important as the core subjects. Elementary school's main focus and priority they idolize is making sure teachers have as much time in the classroom to teach the core subjects that are in the standardized testing, that being Reading, Writing, Math, and the Language Arts. Physical Education is not one of these core subjects, nor as nearly as important to be taught in elementary school classrooms. Teachers have ultimately been steered into believing that every other subject outside of the four core subjects I have listed above, has no meaningful purpose in their classroom. With this mindset of teachers being trained to specifically care about the standardized testing only, and that translating that into their elementary school students is without a doubt appalling. It is saddening to know students are going to school to simply learn that their only major concern should be to prepare all year to score high on a test, that is of in the best interest of their school looking superb on the School Accountability Report Card in

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comparison to all the other schools within their district. While students are time consumed and invested in these standardized testing, the interest of their overall well-being is being simply tossed to the side. How is it that an individual student's well-being including their body and mental health not equally as significant as a senseless standardized test?

Today students are expected to attend school for approximately eight hours, five days out of the week. During those eight hours, students are expected to be glued to a desk without any movement whatsoever. According to De La Cruz (2017), "In 1961, President Kennedy said school kids needed physical activity to thrive, but in the past 20 years, the pendulum has totally shifted the opposite way because schools are feeling the pressure to have students do well on standardized tests" (De La Cruz, 2017, p. 2). This quote exemplifies how today the main concern for elementary schools and teachers is to have elementary school students score high on standardized testing. Teachers concerns and priorities have shifted elsewhere. Instead of prioritizing standardized testing, teachers should be advocating for the promotion of students having a healthy body and mind when attending school. The limitations of having students being expected to be seated in their chairs with no sudden movement makes it extremely challenging of reaching the recommendation of children participating in at least sixty minutes of physical activity every day. Research states that more students today are easily distracted, bored, tired, and disengaged while learning in the classroom. This is due to lack of physical movement and participation in physical activities that can be easily accessible in correlating with any core subject. As I stated above earlier in the Introduction/Background section, in 2008 the "*No Child Left Behind*" legislation is another notion that makes teachers jobs a lot more challenging. Especially when in this particular case, is due to the removal of funds and allotted instruction time to have physical activities in the classroom makes it seem quite impossible to do so. This

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legislation bill ultimately led to school budget cuts that not only made it difficult for teachers to have the adequate supplies to provide physical activity inside the classrooms', but students' have also had to endure being apart of an educational school system that does not allow them to seek all of their possible learning styles. It is safe to say that after the NCLB occurred it affected elementary school teachers, students, and the school altogether. Why not let all students experience the opportunity of learning through the participation of physical activities in the classroom? What do elementary schools and teachers have to lose when providing some instructional time in the classroom, that involves physical activities and movement? If teachers can only see the bigger picture here, the first step is for teachers to see that physical activities do indeed have many benefits to a student's overall academic performance in the classroom. Teachers need to take a step back and acknowledge that physical activities in the classroom are not a mistake to advocate for. Instead, physical activities in the classroom can make all the difference in a child living a longer healthier life ultimately. Why wouldn't a teacher want to advocate to integrate physical activity, have provided time in their daily classroom schedules, and be part of a cause that is truly beneficial?

Children without physical activity inside the classroom suffer from obesity, diabetes, and lower test scores. With the obesity rate in the United States being so high, many young adolescent children are being impacted in emotional and academic ways. Research also highlights that teachers and schools are where children spend the majority of their time with in their everyday lives. If school and teachers are the sanctuary of our children's futures, why are we not making their academic experience worthwhile? School should be the place students can confide and look up to their teachers instructional methods being taught in the classroom. If teachers were integrating physical activities in their classrooms then it would not be so

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challenging or foreign for teachers to provide the necessary support their students need in any particular situation. For example, research shows that teachers often feel helpless with knowing how to support their students through the difficult transitions within health conditions such as obesity. This is due to the lack of knowledge, support, adequate resources and materials a teacher needs prior to integrating physical activities into their classroom. Teachers should not have to feel inefficient when it comes to supporting their students as best as possible. Everything is preventable and can be changed for the better. The first step is just starting somewhere and making the initiative to make that change. That is why research shows that teachers who are innovative, creative, think outside of the box (do not follow the norms or misconceptions), and make it their responsibility to ensure the integration and increase of physical activities be embedded into their teaching style.

Students need the time to get up and stretch out of their seats. They need to have the opportunity to be involved in movement and physical activities to alleviate any built up stress mentally and tension they may have built up in their bodies. Students need to be given the time to recharge from the meticulous learning they are regularly participating in daily. While I do acknowledge that students do need to learn the importance of knowing how to sit quietly during prompted instructed time, it is also an essential that they recognize when their body needs a break to re-energize and revitalize.

Recommendation

Throughout many of my findings, there is conclusive amounts of evidence pinpointing that there is a positive effect on the relationship between physical activities and academic performance. Additionally, another positive elementary students gain from having physical

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activities in the classroom, is benefiting their overall physical and mental health as well. Having the opportunity to further analyze the research I have composed, has also given me the endless amounts of different perspectives as to why integrating physical activities in elementary classrooms is extraordinarily beneficial. Becoming a future educator, involves the following characteristics: being able to be open to new ideas, creativeness, and innovation. With that said, teachers incorporating physical movement through physical activities in their classroom will exceedingly benefit all of their students. Although schools may have different values to prioritize, in the end all schools ultimately wish that every student succeed as much as they can. The recommendation is that teachers make the best of their personal circumstances they may be facing, and implement physical activities through movement into their daily schedules frequently. Even if there is teachers who are lacking resources, support, or knowledge that is no longer an excuse as to why they cannot be creative enough to use what they have provided in their classrooms already. Teachers are so quick to list the negatives as to why they can't incorporate physical activities in the classroom, instead they should look into branching out to their colleagues for new bright innovative ideas and recommendations as to how they can all make it work together. Teachers need to think outside of the box, learn how to work with what is given, use their colleagues as moral support, and collaborate regularly to stay up to date. Teachers often forget that this profession is truly powerful. Teachers have the capacity and influence of being able to collaborate with one another when in need of support. Collaboration is the privilege of stepping out of the norm and the opportunity to create endless exciting activities all students can participate in. Working with others will motivate and push teachers to want to keep creating new inspiring ideas to be of use in the classroom. Therefore, teachers need to realize they are not alone and can ask for help when in need of support. That way when a teacher

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is recognizing that his/her students are becoming bored again, they can reach out to their fellow colleagues to regenerate a new concept to implement into their classroom. Again, there is no more valid excuses as to why teachers can't integrate physical activities in their classrooms. As educators it is our ultimate duty and responsibility to accept the realization of when students need a break to re-energize, and this can be fixed by simply adding any type of physical activity. In the end, educators will leave with the gratification of knowing that by taking on this important duty, students will have an increase in their academic performance, an overall well-being in their mental health and emotional state. Last but certainly not least, by teachers taking on this role will help strengthen the chances of their students living a longer healthier lifestyle.

Problems and Limitations

Altogether, there is significant amounts of authentic research and field study I have found throughout my research process this semester. There were also some limitations I came across during my research process. One challenge I encountered is not being able to retrieve as much field study data as I would have originally wanted. It was inconvenient to not know when exactly I would hear back from the many teachers' I reached out to in order to fulfill as much data as I would have wanted to use in my research paper. Therefore, it was much more difficult to not have those findings with the teachers responses I needed in order to begin constructing my writing process for my research paper. Another limitation I faced was in regards to the overall size of population. Not receiving as much teacher and student feedback within the Monterey county community, totaled into a smaller population for my final data I retrieved. I was only able to retrieve anonymous surveys from four teachers and twenty-two elementary school students. I believe that if I would have had a lot more responses back from teachers and students that it would've been more interesting and beneficial to see a wider range of collected data to analyze

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in my overall research project. Overall, if I would have had more time to retrieve responses from teachers and students throughout other cities (not just the Monterey County Community), I believe it would've been a more compelling addition to consider towards my overall research project. Some people may become more skeptical or change their opinions after acknowledging that due to the couple of limitations I have listed above. Although I did face some limitations, I am still very confident in presenting the research I have found as it is still significant, meaningful, and adequate.

Conclusion

Throughout the entire duration of this semester, I have collected thorough accurate research that correlates outside field studies with the many innovative ideas involving the benefits physical activities have towards elementary school students in the classroom. There is extensive research proving that physical activities inside the classroom are exceedingly beneficial to elementary school students. In addition, there is also extensive amounts of research and evidence justifying that physical activities are extremely vital towards an elementary school students overall well-being (both physically and mentally), along with their academic performance. It is quite surprising and shocking to know that there is numerous amounts of factual evidence targeted towards the immense importance as to why the integration of physical activities into the classroom is extremely beneficial to elementary school students. The first step to make is the following: recognizing how physical activity “as a whole” is generally vital for children to be experiencing frequently in their everyday daily routines in life. By understanding how purposeful and meaningful this is, will only help confirm the comprehension as to why physical activity results into students experiencing an improvement in their academic performance. The bottom line here is for teachers to stop questioning the relationship physical

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activity has with the increased improvement elementary school students have on their overall academic performance. Teachers need to stop having all these doubts and misconceptions towards being convinced to the following question, “How can physical activities actually have a relationship with the improvement towards a students academic performance?” Teachers need to believe and have faith in the provided evidence proving that the integration of physical activity, is in fact beneficial to all elementary school students.

After discovering the revealing results and findings, teachers need to stop with the excuses and stop listing negative reasonings as to why they believe the integration of physical activities in the classroom is not vital towards an elementary school students overall academic performance. Teachers need to learn how to work with what is given, and realize that implementing physical activities into their classrooms is one hundred percent doable! Again, the pros to integrating physical activities into the elementary classroom are as follows: daily participation in any type of physical activity can prevent health-related issues (ex: obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease), students will alleviate any built up anxiety, students will release and reduce any built up stress, a huge increase is seen in a student’s learning, test scores and academic success, students will have a higher self-esteem, students will have higher confidence levels (ex: leadership skills), students will have higher attentiveness levels, students will feel less overwhelmed when learning in an enjoyable, comforting environment (ex: the integration of physical activities in the classroom will provide this kind of environment for elementary school students), students solve problems with fewer mistakes and show full completion of tasks when participating in physical activity breaks.

Therefore, educators need to acknowledge and accept that there are so many beneficial contributing factors correlating to an elementary school students health and academic

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performance. Educators can easily implement physical activities by using free online websites providing countless amounts of in-class activities. I have provided in Appendix three a list of activities and resources teachers can use as a start. All of the websites I have listed in Appendix three can accessible online for free, and have guided instructions for teachers to easily follow. There are available resources for educators to know how to properly implement physical activities into their classroom. Teachers can incorporate the use of movement when students need to transition into centers, stations, or walk in a straight line to the bathroom. Teachers can have students do a different kind of exercise for every transition. Such as marching, lunging, hopping, tip toeing, skipping and so much other physical activity movements that can be easily incorporated as well. The results from the teacher surveys I have received stated, “They do believe that physical activities are necessary for elementary school students to succeed in the classroom, and that the integration of physical activities in their classroom does benefit a student’s learning.” Overall, if teachers agreed that physical activities are necessary and beneficial towards elementary school students learning performance, all that is left for the educators themselves to decide whether or not they would like to leave with a clear conscious of knowing they did everything they can do to positively impact the future lives of their students. Educators that care for their students future lives will find the time and do whatever it takes to implement physical activities into their classrooms.

Altogether, it is extremely crucial for teachers to be knowledgeable, prepared, and communicate to other teachers upon the awareness of how powerful, vital, and meaningful as to how advantageous students will benefit their overall physical health, mental health, and academic performance when being able to move within their daily class routines. I truly hope that with the information I have provided in this paper; that it will speak and raise awareness to

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all educators working in the teaching profession. My ambition here is to bring further awareness towards future educators, such as myself as well because my responsibility as a future educator is to teach, motivate, and be a positive role model for all my students. In addition, having physical activities inside the classroom will also benefit students to become more aware with their health status, nutritional decisions, and the tracking of exercise they complete each day as well. I want to support, advocate, and spread the meaningful purpose as to why the benefits of integrating physical activities should be embedded into the classroom again. My ultimate goal here is to stress the value of my research topic and how the benefits of physical activities do indeed optimize the chances of all our children living a longer healthier life.

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Anonymous Teacher Survey Questions

- 1.) Do you think the integration of physical activities in the classroom benefits a student's learning?
- 2.) Do you think physical activities are necessary for elementary school students to succeed in the classroom?
- 3.) Do you incorporate physical activities into your curriculum? If so, how does it meet the state standards?
- 4.) How has the NCLB affected your classroom?
- 5.) How has the NCLB affected the curriculum in your classroom?
- 6.) How has the NCLB affected physical education activities in your classroom?
- 7.) What are the potential benefits of integrating physical education activities at the elementary school level?
- 8.) Do you believe there are consequences for not including physical education activities into your curriculum? If so, how and what are those potential consequences?
- 9.) If the school district were to advocate for the inclusion of physical education activities to be embedded back into the curriculum, would you be on board as well?

Anonymous Student Survey Questions

- 1.) Do you believe that all students should have the opportunity to experience what learning style best suits his/her needs? YES or NO
- 2.) Do you learn best by moving around or being hands-on? YES or NO
- 3.) There are four different types of learning styles: Auditory, Visual, Reading/Writing, and Kinesthetic. Would you consider learning by being able to physically move around the classroom? YES or NO
- 4.) Do you get tired, bored, or sleepy sitting in the classroom for about 8 hours, 5 days out of the week? YES or NO
- 5.) If so, would you be happy to participate in a classroom that allows physical activities and getting up out of your chair to occur? YES or NO
- 6.) Do you feel that you move around or exercise enough in school? YES or NO
- 7.) Do you believe that by including physical activities inside the classroom, will be helpful towards you knowing how important it is to exercise each day? YES or NO
- 8.) Do you believe that physical activities is beneficial to your academic success? YES or NO
- 9.) Do you believe that physical activities help benefit your overall well-being as a whole for your future life? YES or NO

Resources/Activities that can be implemented into the Classroom

Active Learning Opportunities: <https://www.bokskids.org/>

Adventure 2 Learning: <https://www.adventure2learning.com/>

BOKS: <https://www.bokskids.org/>

Brain Gym: braingym.org

Classroom Brain Breaks Pinterest Board:

<https://www.pinterest.com/act4healthykids/classroom-brain-breaks/>

CosmicKids: <https://www.cosmickids.com/category/watch/>

Energizing Brain Breaks: energizingbrainbreaks.com

GoNoodle: <https://www.gonoodle.com/>

Fit4Schools: <https://fit4schools.sanfordfit.org/>

Fitness Breaks Tip Sheet English/Spanish:

[http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/pdfs/tipsheets-may-2018/fitness-breaks-](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/pdfs/tipsheets-may-2018/fitness-breaks-2-27-17.pdf)

[2-27-17.pdf](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/pdfs/tipsheets-may-2018/span-fitness-breaks-9-3-17-bleeds.pdf) [http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/pdfs/tipsheets-may-](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/pdfs/tipsheets-may-2018/span-fitness-breaks-9-3-17-bleeds.pdf)

[2018/span-fitness-breaks-9-3-17-bleeds.pdf](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/pdfs/tipsheets-may-2018/span-fitness-breaks-9-3-17-bleeds.pdf)

Mindful Life: mindfullifeyoga.com

Move to Learn: <https://www.youtube.com/user/MovetoLearnMS/videos>

Olympian-themed Brain Boosters: [http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on/find-](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on/find-challenges/classroom-challenges/1341)

[challenges/classroom-challenges/1341](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on/find-challenges/classroom-challenges/1341)

Songs and Stories for Movement: [http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools/find-](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools/find-challenges/classroom-challenges/1219-songs-and-stories-with-movements)

[challenges/classroom-challenges/1219-songs-and-stories-with-movements](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools/find-challenges/classroom-challenges/1219-songs-and-stories-with-movements)

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TAKE 10!: <https://take10.net/>

Yoga Kids: yogakids.com

Yoga 4 Classrooms: yoga4classrooms.com