



After-School Program Policy Recommendations to Prevent Obesity:

The HOP'N After-School Project

Tanis J. Hastmann & David A. Dzewaltowski

¹Department of Kinesiology and Youth Health Behavior Research Laboratory, Kansas State University, Manhattan KS



BACKGROUND

The Healthy Opportunities for Physical Activity & Nutrition (HOP'N) After-School Project was designed to prevent obesity by enhancing the quality of after-school programming. This study reports findings from implementing policy recommendations to improve the after-school snack quality to include fruits and vegetables and to improve the quality of after-school programs to engage the students in 30 minutes of daily structured physical activity (PA).

METHODOLOGY

As part of a cluster-randomized trial, elementary after-school sites were randomized to receive the HOP'N obesity program (n=4) or control (n=3) for two years. Staff attended three trainings each year over two academic years and were given the goal to implement 30 minutes of daily structured PA and increase FV snack offerings. Structured interviews were conducted with after-school staff from four HOP'N sites, including: organizational leaders, site program managers, and 4th grade group leaders (Year 1, n=20; Year 2, n=17). Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed using QSR Nvivo software.

RESULTS

After-school policies were well received but encountered implementation challenges. All participants reported that the goals of daily PA and FV snack were not met. Implementation challenges for PA and snack are provided in Tables 1 & 2.

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TABLE 1 – BARRIERS & FACILITATORS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	Year 1		Year 2	
	PM's (n=4)	GL (n=13)	PM's (n=4)	GL's (n=10)
Believe implemented	75	76.9	100	80
Barriers				
Organizational				
Prioritizing PA	75	84.6	75	80
Lack school support	75	53.8	50	100
Lack PM support	25	69.2	25	100
High GL turnover	N/A	61.5	N/A	75
Low training attendance	0	53.8	0	30
Staff				
Low GL motivation	75	84.6	50	40
Fun CATCH games	75	84.6	50	20
Facilitators				
Organizational				
Equipment/Gym Space	100	92.3	100	90
Training	100	61.5	50	60
Scheduling PA	100	100	75	70
Staff				
High self-efficacy	75	61.5	100	80
Fun CATCH games	50	53.8	75	60

TABLE 2 – BARRIERS & FACILITATORS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SNACK POLICY

Variable	Participant Quotations
Perceived positive snack changes	"Snack has been much better now than it used to be, we're starting to get fresh FV more often, and we're not getting donuts and cookies."
Barriers	
Cost	"The problem is money... because if you have cut-up fruits & vegetables it is a labor issue of cutting the apples or else buying prepared food that is in little packages."
Lack trust of after-school staff	"I'm requested for healthier snacks, but when my equipment has been abused, from having my pans ruined due to glitter to having the lid to my milk cooler destroyed, trust is getting lost and it's hard to gain back. So I go to a simple simple snack."
Snack not a priority	"Snack, as long as they get fed, because I go over budget on the snack... it is just an expense to me."
Facilitators	
Requesting healthier snacks	"We've requested no more donuts and the lunch lady doesn't supply donuts anymore."
Encourage healthy snacks received	"She'll give us oranges, and I'll be like, 'the kids really liked the oranges', and then for like a week and a half we'll get oranges all the time."

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Three-time yearly training of after-school staff
2. Daily physical activity for 30 minutes following CATCH guidelines
3. Healthful fruit and vegetable snack
4. Weekly HOP'N Club curriculum

CONCLUSIONS

Staff must receive continuous training to support policy changes to prevent obesity in after-school programs. PA needs to be an organization and staff priority, which leads to the provision of equipment/gym space. In addition to school district policy changes regarding the snack, after-school staff need to establish a relationship with food service personnel at each after-school site to assure implementation.

