

Implementing a Structured Walking Program for PreK through 8th Grade Teachers

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BACKGROUND

Physical inactivity has become a significant health concern not only in the United States but worldwide. Adults are becoming sedentary due to sitting at work and school, computer use, and motorized transportation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers experienced increased workloads, increased sedentary work time for virtual classes, and longer work hours. A PreK-8 school system in the southeastern United States had health promotion and prevention programs for students but no health and wellness programs for teachers. Wellness programs can promote physical health and less absenteeism. Additionally, for students to be successful in the classroom, they need to have healthy role models who are given opportunities to focus on their wellness and well-being. In order for the teachers to provide the highest quality of education, they must care for themselves.

PROBLEM

- 1 in 4 adults do not meet national guidelines
- Only 24% of adults meet national guidelines in the U.S.
- In 2012, 46% of teachers performed less than national guidelines, which likely worsened due to pandemic

PURPOSE

- Participate in a structured walking program
- Increase their distance and time spent walking to 150 minutes weekly
- Increase amount of weekly physical activity while participating in the structured walking program

EVIDENCE

- There is strong strength of evidence for increased distance walked by implementing a structured walking program for teachers.
- There is good and consistent evidence for increased time spent walking by implementing a structured walking program for teachers.

METHODS

Setting

- Sweetwater City School district

Population

- PreK through 8th grade teachers

Intervention

- Participants were recruited with an in-person educational session
- Interested teachers completed a project participation form then a pre survey
- Pre survey was used to assess their age, gender, grade teaching, race, ethnicity, height, weight, distance & time walked, current physical activity status, and feelings toward physical activity
- Weekly surveys were sent out through Qualtrics along with educational information & tips for 12 weeks to measure miles & minutes walked weekly
- At Week twelve, participants also completed a post test

FINDINGS

Demographics

- 35 teachers completed the program
- 91% female; 9% male
- 97% Caucasians; 3% African Americans
- Primary school had the most participation of 25%
- Average age 44; youngest 23; oldest 69

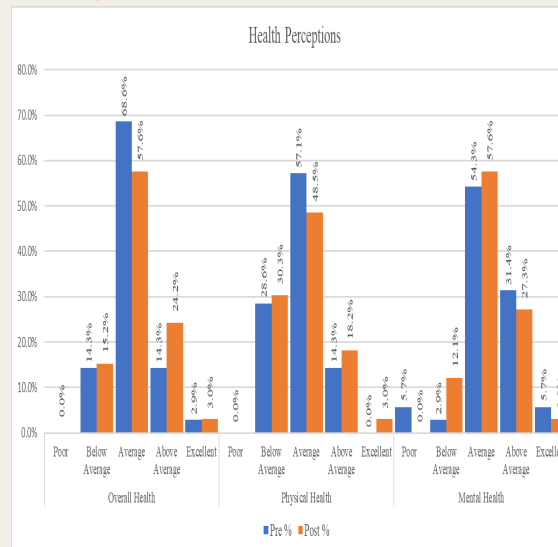
Distance

	Week 1	Week 12
Average	10.83	16.38
Max.	36	160
Min.	1	1.50

Time

	Week 1	Week 12
Average	168	205
Max.	480	660
Min.	3	14

Perceptions



DISCUSSION

- 49% experienced an improvement in perceived activity levels
- Average distance walked in Week twelve was 16.38 miles compared to 10.83 in Week one
- Average time walked in Week twelve was 205 minutes compared to 168 minutes in Week one
- Statistically significant increase in perceptions of physical activity levels compared to prior non-structured exercise
- Data not normally distributed due to four participants walking several more miles than everyone else
- Limitations
 - COVID
 - Weather
 - Shorter daylight hours
 - Self report
- Strengths
 - Feasible
 - Cost effective
 - Positive outcomes
 - Sustainable
- Employers can encourage staff to walk more to improve their overall health, which can create fewer sick days & increase energy & worker productivity
- Walking interventions can be prescribed to treat physical inactivity
- For sustainability, weekly check-ins would be effective

CONCLUSION

- Walking programs are an excellent way for individuals to learn about the importance of physical activity & be motivated to create a habit of walking for twelve weeks and beyond
- Walking programs can reduce individuals risk for chronic disease, contribute to growth & development, improve mental health, promote social interaction, & improve sleep habits



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