

Example of setting up “Physical Activity Pauses at School” (PAPS) in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium)

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Abstract

As it has been underlined in the 2016 Active Healthy Kids Belgium Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth shows that, practicing at least 60 minutes of moderate to high physical activity (PA) daily, only 7% of children aged 6 to 9 and 2% of young people aged 10 to 17 meet the international recommendations of the World Health Organization (Wijtzjes et al., 2016).

Several authors recommend inserting 4 to 6 minutes physical activity breaks, once or twice a day, into the usual activities of the class (Ma et al., 2015). In the French speaking part of Belgium, Cloes & Cloes (2018) adapted that approach and proposed a specific version called PAPS (Physical Activity Pauses at School).

The present study was conducted within a collaboration between the Consortium “Physical Activities, Wellbeing and Health” involved in the implementation of a major reform of the educational system and Viasano, a non-profit organization promoting physical activity in Belgian cities/communities. It aimed to analyse the perceptions of classroom teachers about the PAPS’ impact on pupils’ motor engagement during the pauses as well as on some cognitive variables (attention, concentration, and focus on the task).

Two groups of classroom teachers (n=20) attended to a half-day seminar designed to prepare them to propose PAPS to their pupils (primary school level). Pre- and post-training questionnaires and roadbooks were fulfilled by the subjects. Reports of informal lessons’ observation, and qualitative observation of videotapes provided data on the teaching process.

11 out of the 20 teachers finally implemented the PAPS. Most of those who did not explained that they did not have a multimedia system in their classroom. It is surprisingly as using PA videos was only one of the approaches proposed during the seminar. Those subjects who implemented the PAPS until the end of the school year (4 months intervention period) expressed their satisfaction, mainly when they were not sure to implement the PAPS at the beginning.

They generally underlined the constraint of class space as the main barrier. Subjects underlined that their pupils were motivated by the PAPS. They considered also that pupils' on-task behaviour improved after these pauses.

References

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