

Abstract

Research indicates physical activity can positively influence the behavior of children. The problem was the number of children ages 5 through 11 years old participating in counseling services for a variety of behavior issues at a Central Florida public elementary school has increased by 46% from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2018-2019 school year. Contributing to the knowledge base was important by providing an understanding of the influence a before-school physical activity program had on the behavior of children in the classroom and the school's role in providing physical activity opportunities for students. The gap in research literature can be addressed by understanding the influence a before-school physical activity program had on reducing classroom behavior problems in children without having an effect on instructional minutes, was free of charge, and did not require additional student transportation or the hiring of additional personnel. The theories guiding the research were Transformational Leadership Theory and Activity Theory, both of which involve the relationships within a group dynamic and the influence others have on individuals in a group setting. Data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with 15 classroom teachers who had at least three students enrolled in the before-school physical activity program. Inductive thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data to identify themes and codes. The results indicated the participants noticed a positive influence on students' behavior in the classroom in a variety of ways and indicated various positive changes in student behavior as a result of participation in the before-school physical activity program. The study contributed data to the research as to the influence and positive effect physical activity has on the behavior of children and in decreasing behavior problems in the classroom, which may lead to less students participating in counseling services for behavior issues.