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Reaching At-Risk Female Adolescents for Inactivity: Case Study for Increasing Educational Interventions

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Health education continually reinvents itself as the need for various health issues and problems evolve. Physical educators need to create a meaningful connection in the classroom for healthy habits that can carry through to adult life. **PURPOSE:** To develop a program that would improve young females understand lifelong activity, build self-confidence to participate in new activities, and foster a healthy outlook on staying active. **METHODS:** The “Fit to Run” program was conceptualized as a secondary in-school option as a Physical Education alternative for female students. Thirty female high school students (BMI = $22 \pm 11 \text{ kg/m}^2$; Waist to Hip = 0.69 ± 0.28) from freshman to senior year were recruited to participate three times a week over five weeks during the last period of the school day. During the five week program the participants were exposed to various activities (yoga/kickboxing/circuit training), nutrition information and tastings, and run/walk sessions. In addition, students were asked to fill out an exercise needs assessment and an open-ended questionnaire about student’s perceptions/ideas about health and physical activity. Attitudes toward health fitness were examined prior to program using frequencies and correlation analyses. **RESULTS:** From the survey it was found that 59% of the students felt that they were the right weight and 51% still want to lose weight. In addition 67% reported that they did not participate in high school sports, but 70% are were interested in learning more alternative activities for health and fitness. While not significant, the correlation analysis revealed that the students with the highest BMI reported less participation in activity ($r = -.366$), less desire to change their weight ($r = -.260$), and poorer overall health status ($r = -.296$). However, students that participate in organized sports show a greater interest in alternative activities for health and fitness ($r = .142$). **CONCLUSIONS:** Based on these results, those that are at most risk are students with a high BMI and are not participating in organized sports. Therefore, utilizing surrounding community-based organizations such as institutions, community centers, and fitness professionals are essential to assist school systems that may lack the resources to provide opportunities for at-risk students.