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Improving Physical Literacy and Increasing Physical Activity Participation of Youth for Better Health Outcomes

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified physical inactivity as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality. There is a positive correlation between physical literacy (PL) and engagement in physical activity (PA) **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this program was to improve PL through education and motor skill competencies to increase physical activity participation in youth. **METHODS:** Six PL lessons were conducted over the course of six weeks to 3-5th grade students in a New Jersey public school. The lessons included the following topics: health introduction, cardiovascular, strength, coordination, fine motor skills and balance. Each lesson started with an instructional video, then physical lessons on the topic, followed by physical games and/or challenges and ended with a group discussion on the topic. A subset of students filled out a physical literacy and confidence survey and completed a battery of movement skills (jumping jacks, squats, target throw and balance) pre and post educational intervention. Assessments were conducted by trained practitioners who focused on movement quality. Descriptive statistics and paired sample T tests were conducted on the assessment and survey scores. **RESULTS:** A total of 18 students completed the assessments. Squat quality ratings improved following the intervention ($p=0.052$), no change was observed for jumping jacks and balance ($ps>0.05$), and ball throw ability decreased ($p=0.01$). Skill quality among the group was low with only 46.7% being able to score sufficient for jumping jacks, 17.6% for squat, 41.2 and 35.3 for right and left sided balance but 76% of the students reported feeling very confident about their gym class scores. **CONCLUSION:** Statistics did not show a consistent overall change from pre to post test. Skill quality for all activities was low in general yet the majority of students reported feeling confident about their movement scores. **SIGNIFICANCE/NOVELTY:** Students reported high confidence in their movement abilities yet scored poorly on tests of physical skills. This disconnect between perception of physical abilities and actual abilities may contribute to lower levels of participation in PA. When individuals are not competent in motor skills, they have lower PL, and engage in less PA. Further study is needed using a larger sample size and grades other than 3-5 to determine how best to improve motor competencies with the goal of increasing PA for students.

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