



2020 DART Virtual Summer Research Day

Impact of a Wellbeing Intervention on Physical Activity Among Early Childhood Education Teachers

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Background: Physical activity is beneficial to overall wellbeing, and has been shown to reduce stress and improve mood (Paluska and Schwenk, 2012). The impacts of living a physically active lifestyle have led to individuals having a higher satisfactory quality for their own life (Peluso & de Andrade, 2005). Building wellbeing activities into the workplace enhances the attitudes and overall health of the individual workers (Chu et al., 2014). This study examines whether engaging in a wellbeing program increased early childhood education (ECE) teachers' physical activity.

Methods: Be Well Care Well (BWCW) is a statewide ECE program designed to promote health and well-being of the ECE teachers. Across South Carolina, 28 ECE centers voluntarily participated in this study, and data was collected from 349 ECE teachers. Each teacher completed a questionnaire during enrollment in the program, and another once enrollment ended, which included their engagement in physical activity. **Results:** The BWCW program showed an increase in physical activity positively correlated to a higher number of hours of engagement in the program, $B = .034$, $p = .008$. At preintervention, 31% of teachers reported that they exercised regularly, and at postintervention, 37% of teachers reported they exercised regularly. This change was not statistically significant, but there was a significant positive association between hours of engagement in the program and change in physical activity.

Conclusion: Findings revealed that embedding a wellbeing program into the workplace significantly impacted preintervention to postintervention change in physical activity. Not only did existence of the program make a difference to the participating teachers, but hours of engagement increased overall physical activity. Given the links between physical activity and overall health, results suggest that a program to support teachers' engagement in physical activity may also improve overall well-being. Improving teacher well-being may have implications for enhancing teachers' ability to provide relationship-based care that better helps children in their classrooms.