



The TEACHER CENTER of Broome County
Teacher Study Group Grant Award
Summer 2008-2009
FINAL REPORT
DOCUMENT PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

STUDY GROUP TOPIC: Health, Physical Fitness, Movement, & Academic Performance

List of group members: Susan Buckley, Andrew Ewing, Dawn Gould, Bridget Sheahan, Michelle Sherwood, Holly Wisniewski

Describe the initial goal of the group noting any adjustments that had to be made as time passed.

Our initial goal was to investigate and study the latest research about the impact of health, physical fitness and movement on academic performance. We planned to collaborate ideas and information about brain research, movement, and differentiation strategies from six different research texts and connect them to the New York State Learning Standards as well as our district curriculum goals at Maine-Endwell.

Our proposal was geared toward finding ways to address student needs through differentiated instruction, improve student attention and focus, and enhance instruction across all content areas by providing material through a fun, hands-on, and kinesthetic approach.

We were able to stick to our initial goals and plans as well as talk to our principal about ways that we can incorporate what we learned through school-wide initiatives, related to ensuring proper nutrition and incorporating more movement into the school day.

Describe the ACTION PLAN that the group followed.

Our action plan consisted of the following:

1. Each of the six members read a different book about brain research and/or the benefits of movement in learning prior to meeting.
2. We met on 3 different days, for about 6 hours each day, to present our books through providing an overview of the text and highlighting important and valuable information that can be used to enhance teacher understanding of student learning and instruction. During each book session, we reflected on and discussed the ideas presented as well as brainstormed valuable ways to use the information to enhance student learning. We referred to our curriculum scope and sequences for ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies for the grades we teach and outlined specific activities and ways that we can use the ideas presented. We also compiled folders of important research data and instructional activities organized by subject area that we will be able to refer back to during the 2008-2009 school year.

Describe how the action plan was implemented.

This action plan was implemented by assigning 2 group leaders per day that were in charge of organizing how their book session would run and prepared all materials needed to share with the group. The whole group then collaborated for all discussions, reflections, and organization of research materials. We worked together to fill out all paperwork needed for the study group and even spent some time speaking with our school principal about how we can incorporate the research and strategies we have learned about into school-wide initiatives and goals.

Evaluate the impact of the study group effort on teacher/student performance. How has this study group changed you as a teacher? Do you anticipate that any of your teaching practices will have changed?

We feel that this study will definitely have an impact on teacher and student performance. Our whole concept of how the brain works and the importance of nutrition, water, and physical movement/exercise in student learning changes our understanding of our students and the way that we deliver information. We have come up with a compilation of activity cards arranged by subject area for each teacher to use in instruction. These task cards will be a resource for us to draw from when we need “movement breaks” throughout the day as well as specific subject area problems to help reinforce skills taught in each of the content areas. These activities are meant to provide movement experiences as well as opportunities to practice skills taught from K-5.

Our general classroom management will change as well as we take into consideration the importance of water and proper nutrients in brain functioning. We plan to provide more opportunities for water consumption and movement throughout the day as well as ensuring that snacks and breakfast/lunch given at school are healthy and support brain functioning and focus/attention. We also plan to create projects/activities that pertain to specific student learning styles.

In addition, we plan to present the research information we have compiled to our colleagues at Maine Memorial and come up with school-wide initiatives that will help students’ general health and brain functioning.

What evidence do you expect to see of student achievement improving as a result of your participating in this study group?

We expect to see an overall increase in alertness and focus as well as participation in class activities. Increased student engagement, involvement, and participation will

provide immediate feedback to help us see which students grasp a new concept. This form of student assessment results will lead to more timely interventions.

What evidence is there that the goals of the study group has/has not been met?

The evidence we have to show that our goals have been met include detailed notes and outlines of specific ways that we will use the research in our curriculum from each book discussion. We also have a collection of activities aligned with our curriculum that are organized by grade level that we will be able to draw from throughout the year.

Comment on the value of the study group process? Did it work for you?

Yes, it was very valuable for us to have this time to research by reading our individual books and then coming together to share the valuable information that we gathered. We felt it was much more manageable to break up the research and then come back together to combine our information through the “jigsaw model.” We also found it very helpful to be able to discuss the research and come up with ideas of how we can apply it in our classrooms as well as how we can work together as a school to use the research to benefit our children. We are excited about what we learned and look forward to incorporating nutrition, hydration, and physical movement/exercise into the daily school day to improve student attention, focus, brain function, and, thus, academic performance.

How can we make this study group program better?

We found it very beneficial to have it during the summer since we have more time to meet and reflect on what we have learned. During our study group work, there were certain supplies that we needed such as index cards, labels, sticky notes, etc. Maybe

groups could submit claim forms for materials used after the group since we were unsure of exactly what we needed before meeting.