



Let's Move It! An Overview of a PSRM Program for Girls

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INTRODUCTION

Abstract

There has been a plethora of research that has summarized the unique barriers to girls' sport and physical activity (PA) participation (Wiese-Bjornstal & Lavoi, 2007) and specifically with girls in urban areas (Sabo, Miller, Melnick, & Heywood, 2004). Sabo and Veliz (2008) concluded that urban girls of color face a variety of challenges that prevent them from undertaking and/or sustaining sport and PA participation. In light of this, researchers (Sabo, Ward, & Oliveri, 2009) and organizations such as Team Up For Youth have provided various best practices for urban girls' programs to attract girls and sustain their sport and PA participation. Personal and Social Responsibility Model (PSRM) (Hellison, 1995) is a youth development physical activity program that aims to promote personal and social responsibility in sport. PSRM programs are participant-directed and have a specific onus on respect, empowerment, and self-direction, which reflect many of the characteristics of best practices identified in research for urban girls' programs. Therefore, a PSRM program could prove to be extremely valuable with an all-girls population. An overview of a current girls' PSRM program conducted in Detroit by the presenters is highlighted, with focus on program findings and suggestions for future PSRM programs with girls.

Background

Girls' Sport and Physical Activity Participation: Challenges and Barriers

There are numerous barriers and challenges to getting girls involved in sport and physical activity including: dislike of certain sports or exercise (Griesser et al, 2006), concerns about safety (Dwyer et al, 2006; Griesser et al, 2006), competence in athletic skills (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010) and fear of embarrassment (Griesser et al, 2006), injury or fear of getting hurt (Griesser et al, 2006; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Stewart & Taylor, 2000), and poor experiences with a coach or leader (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Stewart & Taylor, 2000).

Best Practices for Girl's Sport and Physical Activity Programs

In a Women's Sport Foundation resource for girls' sport and exercise program, Sabo et al (2009) outline aspects of girl friendly programs. These include: incorporating "more than just sports" by offering diverse programming that includes educational or social activities, emphasizing that anyone can play, using older girls as peer mentors or junior coaches, and having girls take responsibility within the program by providing opportunities for girls to offer input into program offerings.

Team Up For Youth (2011) suggest addressing cultural barriers for girls in low-income communities or communities of color, designing programs (e.g. facilities, coach, curriculum) with girls in mind, acknowledging the importance of female role models/coaches for girls, and developing positive relationships among girls and their coaches.

In research looking at best practices for developing physically active girls, Wiese-Bjornstal and Lavoi (2007) provide numerous antecedents, including: having peers that use respect, care, and inclusion, and program leaders that create a psychological, social, and physical safe environment, incorporate girls' opinions in program design, and offer both structured and unstructured physical activity options.

Personal and Social Responsibility Model (Hellison, 1995)

Hellison's PSR model aims to empower at-risk youth by having them take more control of their lives. Participants focus on being sensitive to the rights, feelings, and needs of others, and to their own self-nurturing and growth. Hellison's model has five basic levels of responsibility: Level 1—Self-control and being respectful to others, Level 2—Effort and participation, Level 3—Self-direction, Level 4—Helping others, Level 5—Applying Levels 1-4 outside the gym (Hellison, 2011). PSRM programs are youth-centered, focus on outside transfer, and in having youth become better people!

Purpose

To provide an overview of a PSRM program conducted with girls in Detroit and highlight the numerous comparisons that exist between the PSRM and best practices for getting girls, especially girls in urban areas, involved in sports and physical activity.

LET'S MOVE IT!

Program Background and Outline

Alternatives for Girls (AFG) was constructed in 2002 in response to community members of southwest Detroit noticing an increase in drug use, homelessness, prostitution, and street activity among girls and young women (www.alternativesforgirls.org). AFG is a multi-service agency that delivers three key services to the community: prevention programming, shelter facilities, and outreach services.

Rise N' Shine is AFG's 6-week summer camp for approximately 50 to 75 second through eighth grade girls who are at risk for academic failure and issues like alcohol abuse and teen pregnancy. Let's Move It! was one of roughly 10 programs offered at the summer camp, with 10 girls, ages 8-10, taking part in this program every Wednesday afternoon for 1.5 hours.

Daily outline: 5 parts of the typical PSRM format (adapted for Let's Move It!)

1. Counseling Time - semi-structured free play
2. Awareness Talk - dedicated time to teach the various aspects of the program
3. Activity - yoga, football, soccer, jump rope, hula hoops
4. Group Meeting - participants and program leaders share views on how day went
5. Reflection Time - participants' use of reflection sheets and one-on-one time with leaders

Successes Experienced

There were several girls who were initially not interested in Let's Move It! or physical activity in general, but by the conclusion of the program they were active participants and enjoyed the variety of activities the program offered.

As part of the lesson plan, students were asked if they wanted to be leaders for small activities during that day. Several girls emerged as more confident in their athletic skills and their ability to effectively communicate with the other girls and leaders.

Challenges Encountered

Even though the program leaders promoted the transfer of life skills outside of the program by spending time individually with girls discussing respect and responsibility in school and at home, it was difficult to conclude whether these skills were truly transferred, especially in such a short period of time (6-week program).

Unfortunately, the youth leaders who were assigned to Let's Move It! proved to be a challenge due to their lack of effort and/or interest in actively participating themselves in the sports and physical activities. This was addressed throughout the program and is an area that will strive to be improved upon, knowing the significant impact these leaders can have on the lives on the young girls.

Evaluation of Program

Two types of evaluation were completed: evaluation of program fidelity, implementation, and effectiveness (by program leaders) and evaluation of program by participants. The Tool for Assessing Responsibility-Based Education (TARE) Post Teaching Reflection Form was completed by program leaders at the midpoint and conclusion of the program to evaluate the effective implementation of PSRM in the Let's Move It! program. The post teaching reflection tool was found to be a reliable tool for assessing program fidelity (Wright & Craig, 2011) and allows program leaders to assess their implementation of specific responsibility-based teaching strategies (Hellison, 2011).

Evaluation by Program Leaders

Both program leaders found that responsibility-based teaching strategies were implemented frequently into the Let's Move It! Program, with a particular focus being on modeling respect to the girls through showing interest in each individual girl and offering respectful communication.

The TARE results also revealed that the personal and social responsibility themes of integration, transfer, empowerment, and teacher-student relationship were frequently applied in the program. Specific implementation with providing girls leadership roles and spending individual time with girls to promote the transfer of life skills in other settings were also noted.

Regarding student responsibility, program leaders observed all students display self-control and most students displayed active participation, effort, self-direction and caring. Most girls were willing to try every activity and often encouraged each other by providing positive feedback.

Evaluations by Girls

It is also important to attain evaluative feedback from the participants. The program leaders created an evaluation form for the girls that was adapted from Hellison (2011). This evaluation inquired into the following elements:

- *What did you learn from the program about respect and responsibility?* - "Respect the teacher", "Be willing to try new things", "Not being bossy"

- *What did you like most about Let's Move It!?* - "I loved playing a new sport like football and I loved doing jump-rope and hula-hoop" "I loved everything in Let's Move It!" & "I like yoga"

| Student Program Evaluation | Yes | No | Not Sure |
|---|-----|-------|----------|
| Did your behavior improve in this program? | 75% | 0% | 25% |
| Will this program help you do better in school next year? | 75% | 12.5% | 12.5% |
| Would you like to do Let's Move It! again next year? | 25% | 0% | 75% |

CONCLUSION

Providing girls a voice and ownership with their program, utilizing youth leaders as mentors to the girls, and creating a supportive, respectful, and encouraging environment were integral elements Let's Move It! Despite the few challenges Let's Move It! encountered, the program leaders believe the overall PSRM naturally incorporates these numerous best practices that, when considering the barriers and challenges girls face with sport and physical activity participation, make a program like Let's Move It! an inherently good fit for girls' sport and physical activity programs in urban areas.

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