

## **Effects of a College-Mentored Physical Activity Program for Elementary Students**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Health risks of a sedentary lifestyle for children, defined as being less than 5,000 steps per day, include unfavorable indicators of body composition and cardio-metabolic risk. Results of school-based physical activity interventions to increase physical activity levels have been mixed. However, mentorship programs have shown promise. Previous mentorship programs have relied on peer-to-peer mentorships, with participants being of a similar age group. College mentors present an alternative and low-cost resource that may also provide positive results, yet have been largely ignored in research studies to date.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of a novel, individualized college-mentored physical activity program on physical activity levels among older elementary school students.

**METHODS:** Fifth grade students ( $n = 12$ ) were paired one-to-one with local college mentors for 30 minute bi-weekly running sessions on the elementary school campus for six weeks. Multiple assessments from activity trackers were compared on intervention versus non-intervention days using paired-samples t-tests.

**RESULTS:** Significant increases in steps ( $t(11) = 8.056; p \leq .001$ ) and moderate-to-vigorous activity ( $t(11) = 5.202; p \leq .001$ ) were seen on intervention days, as compared to non-intervention days. The average increase in step count on intervention days (6,381) versus non-intervention days (3,158) also resulted in students being elevated out of a sedentary classification.

**CONCLUSION:** Individualized mentoring from college students significantly increased multiple assessments of physical activity, including minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity and number of steps taken. Perhaps most notably, the mentored physical activity program promoted students from a sedentary to active lifestyle on intervention days as determined by step count. This novel high-impact and low-cost approach should be further developed for future school-based physical activity programs and research.