

8. The evaluation of ActiveChat: A classroom-based physical activity and sedentary behaviour programme implemented in Scottish secondary schools

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This abstract contributes to the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework as it is an evaluation of a classroom-based programme which aimed to educate adolescents on the importance of physical activity and motivate them to become more active. The programme also encouraged adolescents to find their own solutions to being more active, thus enhancing autonomy and competence.

Background: Physical activity (PA) of Scottish adolescents is low, with 18% reportedly meeting the guidelines. The school environment can provide opportunities for pupils to be active. ActiveChat is a classroom-based, teacher delivered PA and sedentary behaviour (SB) programme designed to enhance motivation and positive attitudes towards PA, reduce SB, and integrate movement within the classroom. Few classroom-based programmes have been designed and implemented within the secondary school setting.

Aim: Evaluation of programmes is important to determine effectiveness, therefore the aim of this study was to evaluate ActiveChat through exploring teacher and pupils' perceptions of the programme and determine the level of fidelity.

Methods: Two teachers (1M, 1F; age range 35-64 years) and 17 pupils (9M, 8F; age range = 11-14 years) participated in semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Duration of interviews/focus groups were ~15-30 minutes. A concurrent deductive and inductive content analysis was used to identify overall themes. Fidelity was assessed through direct observation, whereby two researchers observed all ActiveChat classes.

Results/Findings: Overall themes identified in the interviews with the teachers were: positive overview of the ActiveChat programme; intended outcomes; negative views towards movement outside lesson tasks; perceived benefits of active learning; recommendations to improve the ActiveChat programme; and personal experience and perceptions. Overall themes identified in the pupil focus groups were: positive perceptions of the ActiveChat programme; negative aspects of the ActiveChat programme; recommendations to improve the ActiveChat programme; learning outcomes; and barriers to PA.

Good levels of fidelity were reported based on researchers' observations, with 63% of the programme being implemented as designed.

Conclusion: Results of this evaluative study suggested teachers and pupils were receptive to the ActiveChat programme and identified its ability to integrate within the Scottish education system – the Curriculum for Excellence. Key findings from the direct observation and the teacher interviews suggest that movement needs to be integrated as part of the lesson tasks, rather than isolated active breaks. These findings and the recommendations provided by both teachers and pupils will further develop the ActiveChat programme for future research and implementation.