



Dog Kennel Hill Consultation Day Summary Report.

Key Discoveries:

Perceived energy levels vs. Activity Levels.

At the beginning of the day the majority of the students and their teachers said that their energy levels were low. This corresponds with the activity levels at this point in the day in fact DKH had the lowest activity levels of all three schools first thing in the morning. The teachers said that the most productive lesson for this year group seemed to be the first period of the day. The children said this lesson was boring. However energy levels rose during this time to medium by break time even though activity levels dropped, this suggests the teachers are working hard to make the lesson stimulating. First break was the most active time of the whole school day. Activity levels dropped sharply over the next two periods. Teachers suggested that another productive lesson was the one before lunch again where energy had dropped from the high after break down to medium.

All of the participants, students and teachers, reported high energy levels after lunch. This could be due in part to the fact that they have eaten as well as had a chance to run around. Activity over lunchtime was not as great as either morning or afternoon break for students but was the highest level of the day for teachers.

By the end of the day opinion was split evenly between those who feel their energy levels are still high and those who feel their levels are low. Activity levels drop over the afternoon dropping below that at the beginning of the day by the final bell.

Teachers at DKH seem to have more (but lower) peaks of activity. The first two peaks of the day are during the first lesson and again at break. The largest peak for teachers is at lunchtime. Both children and teachers energy levels start high but dip along with their activity after lunch. While the childrens activity continues to decrease during the afternoon, the teachers have another peak in the lesson before afternoon break. Activity for teachers then dips sharply at afternoon break where the children are running around again. This mismatch between teacher and pupil activity levels and reported energy levels in the afternoon could explain why the teachers report feeling so exhausted at the end of the day.

Levels of activity seem to boost energy levels for this group of younger children more quickly than the secondary school girls. They come in from break and lunch with high levels of energy. The most productive times, according to teachers, are where energy levels are reported by the children as being medium. Despite the extra break in the afternoon the numbers of children with high and low levels of energy at the end of the day were equal which mirrors the feelings of the girls at the secondary school.

P.E. and Sport.

Children at DKH seem to have more peaks of activity during their PE lessons perhaps it is because the emphasis at this age is on learning by doing instead of explaining in great

detail first. Children enjoy their PE lessons and the sports they do in them. They did not seem to feel that they needed to change the types of sport they do already. They enjoy football basketball and hockey. Several children were interested in exploring a more calming activity such as yoga, meditation or breathing exercises. They were keen that the teachers should learn these new forms of exercise too to keep them calm. The children seemed to recognize and appreciate that staff were sometimes under stress. Some girls would like to do more dance in their PE lessons.

When discussing the creation of new sports and activities the children were keen to mix an existing sport with a more cerebral activity inventing games such as “Maths Football” or “Quiz catch”

Links between activity and concentration. (Stroop Test)

The children discovered that some people’s concentration got better with moderate physical activity and some by more mentally challenging activity (e.g. Fizz Buzz or clapping games). Although the tests were not taken under strict scientific conditions 80% of participants found that their Stroop test was better after physical exercise and 90% found the test was better after the ‘mental’ activity. 44% of the participants found that the physical activity increased their performance more than the mental activity and 44% found that the mental activity increased their performance more than the physical activity. 12% found their test times were the same or worse after each activity.

This would suggest that it did not matter what type of short activity teachers elects to use to break up a lesson but they should have a toolkit of different possibilities and maybe be aware of the preferences of the most challenging children, as the others will benefit anyway.

Both teachers and pupils were interested in where they could add activity into lessons. The children suggested lots of possibilities for short games that could be used to focus their attention in the classroom both games that they knew and some they made up.

Activity and the Curriculum.

At the beginning of the day (String Web) the pupils seemed to think that, as they felt tired after PE that it should be placed at the end of the day. However by the end of the afternoon (Snowball) equal numbers would rather have PE in the morning to raise their energy levels. They really seemed to have taken on board the ‘Physical activity improves learning’ hypothesis.

Teachers had picked up on the fact that a short focused activity helped some children to concentrate and agreed with one boy who suggested doing a Sudoku puzzle at the beginning of a lesson. They also thought that a short physical activity in the middle of the lesson might be worth experimenting with. Children were used to the concept of ‘Brain Gym’ and several of them suggested that it might be used to good effect in their lessons.

The Word games lesson showed a high level of activity, Second only to PE. Teachers might like to experiment with similar activities in other subjects.

Implications for possible timetable changes:

- ♣ Attempt to match teacher and pupil activity levels throughout the afternoon to see if this has a positive effect on the teachers feeling of exhaustion by the end of the day. Possibly try calming activities after lunch and encourage teachers to take some exercise during afternoon break time.
- ♣ Replace afternoon break with a short period of structured aerobic exercise for both pupils and teachers, or teachers to join in activities led by the children at break time.
- ♣ The data would seem to support the idea of a longer 'siesta style' lunch break where energy levels would have a chance to settle from the post lunch high to medium and mirror the more productive periods in the morning. As this would probably be impractical at a primary school experiment with a 10 minute period of dance/relaxation/singing after lunch and to settle energy levels back to medium.
- ♣ Consider putting PE at the beginning of the day to raise energy levels.