



## **Harris Girls Academy Consultation Day Summary Report.**

### **Key Discoveries:**

#### **Perceived energy levels vs. Activity levels**

At the beginning of the day the majority of the girls felt that their energy levels were low. This corresponds with the activity levels at this point in the day. Most of the teachers reported that the most productive lessons were generally later in the morning.

After the first lesson most participants reported energy levels at medium even though the accelerometer data indicated that activity levels had dropped over the first period. This implies that the teachers work hard in the first periods of the day to engage the girls and raise their energy levels. All the girls told us that when PE is the first lesson of the day their energy is high after the lesson. Generally teachers felt that the most productive lessons were after break in the morning, which is the time of highest activity. However the girls at Waverly showed the lowest levels of break time activity of all three schools. It will be interesting after the second accelerometer week, to compare activity levels at break time before the summer with the new Harris Girls academy regime.

The accelerometer readings showed that Waverly girls had the lowest levels of activity during lunchtime. We suspect that with the extra activities offered this year as Harris Girls Academy this will no longer be the case.

Half the girls reported low energy levels after lunch they suggested this is because they feel physically tired after all the physical activities offered at lunchtime. This is in sharp contrast with the two other schools where we had suggested calming activities after lunch to get the students energy down to medium for better focus and concentration in lessons. We noticed on the consultation day that it was much easier to get the Harris girls to settle after lunch than it had been in the other two schools. This suggests that organized activity has a more dampening effect on energy levels than free activity. We would argue however that although the girls said their energy levels were low that this was due to physical tiredness. We felt that in the session after lunch, their concentration and mental energies were high and that they did their most creative thinking at this time. However one of the teachers still found the girls 'bouncing' in periods 5 and 6 but all agreed that behaviour had been better under the new regime.

By the end of the day opinion was split, half the girls felt their energy was low and the other half rated energy at medium. Activity levels had dropped over the afternoon to equal those in the first period of the day. However if PE had been the last lesson of the day half the girls thought their energy would be high rather than medium and half the girls thought their energy would still be low.

#### **Activity in the curriculum.**

When we talked with the girls about what they did in lessons when they felt their energy was low they almost unanimously agreed that they felt a need to move around or talk/sing to raise their energy levels. The girls pointed out that this was frowned upon in class and

seen as 'mucking about'. We suggest that perhaps more kinaesthetic activities could be incorporated into traditionally seated lessons or a couple of minutes of physical activity (jumping, shaking, stretching) or brain gym standing behind the desks when the girls are restless.

*"I learn better when I have a break and practice dance moves using my arms."*

*"Maths games and subject games help you in lessons"*

*"I learn best when we are more active in a lesson than sitting down"*

### **P.E. and Sport.**

When asked to create a new sport/activity the groups generally tried to link two existing activities together e.g. basketball and football, or dancing and badminton. The third group was slightly more imaginative and combined Grandmothers footsteps game with basketball. The girls did exceedingly well in the short time and limited space they had and by the end of the activity they had started to develop quite sophisticated rules for their sports. If this idea were to be developed further it would be useful to have a much longer session or a series of sessions where girls could be encouraged to explore the features of all of their favourite activities and sports in more detail and have the time to develop more sophisticated and creative ideas.

### **Links between activity and concentration. (Stroop Test)**

The girls discovered that most people's concentration got better with moderate physical activity (e.g. dancing or stepping) and some by more mentally challenging activity (e.g. Fizz Buzz or singing) They also discovered that when the physical activity was too hard and they were still out of breath, their score got worse. They were able to see that everyone has different reactions to the activities and by the end of the session most of the girls had an idea of what worked for them personally.

*"I learnt that the more energetic I am the more I will concentrate"*

*"I learnt how quiet and how active I can be. The more energetic I am the more I loose concentration"*

*"I found I learn better when I am quiet"*

Several of the girls took the Stroop sheets away so they could continue to experiment on themselves. Unfortunately, due to teaching commitments it was not possible for the teachers to join in this activity, In other schools the teachers had been surprised by some of the results of the activities on their own concentration.

At the end of the day the girls were asked how they had enjoyed the day and asked to identify one thing they had learnt about themselves. Although reluctant after lunch to be put into groups of mixed age for the afternoon art activity several of the girls mentioned how much they had enjoyed working with the other girls and that they had discovered that they could work with anybody.

*"I learnt that I can work well in a group without knowing anyone in that specific group."*

*"I learnt that I can work with anyone"*

### **Implications for possible timetable changes:**

One key difference between Harris Girls Academy and the other schools in the project is that there have already been carefully considered changes to the timetable over the summer holidays as the school metamorphosed into an Academy. The accelerometer readings were taken during the running of the old Waverly timetable but our consultation day took place after the new academy timetable had been running for over half a term. This means the perceptions of energy we collected from the girls were as they feel under the new timetable and some suggestions we might make, based on the accelerometer data such as additional activities offered at lunchtime, have already been implemented. It will be interesting to explore some of the changes already made to the timetable in the evaluation of the re-designed week.

Further suggestions are:

♣ **Raise energy levels before the first lesson.**

Our first suggestion was to have a physical activity first thing in the morning however the school had already moved their activity session from first thing in the morning to the afternoon with the new timetable.

Our second suggestion is to encourage attendance at a breakfast club. The school already runs a club but it is not popular as it has a charge. Teachers were agreed that when a breakfast club had been offered in SATS week there had been a number of benefits. We suggest that if funds could be found for the changed week. The day could be started slightly earlier and the girls could be offered breakfast together for the first 20 minutes of the day and this social activity be used to raise energy in the mornings.

On the consultation day the some of the girls were keen to run off at break time and 'do their hair' another girl was wearing a hat because she was concerned about her 'bad hair day' maybe if some sort of informal personal grooming advice were offered at this time, perhaps by sixth formers, the girls would be motivated to come to school on time.

*"We should have a set time just to talk"*

*"I think we should lunch all together"*

*"We should have something to do first thing when we come to school."*

Roy Williams timetable consultant had made the suggestion, to the other secondary school in the project, that this time can be used for teachers to pop in and give the girls a 'heads up' about what to expect in their lesson later in the day and both girls and teachers rated the breakfast club as one of the highlights of the re-designed week.

♣ **More activity in traditionally seated lessons.**

Incorporate more kinaesthetic activities into subject lessons where traditionally girls sit down most of the time. We would like to challenge one of the teachers of a subject at the bottom of the accelerometer graph (e.g. history, RE.) to teach the whole or part of a lesson in the redesigned week in a room with no tables and chairs as suggested by one of the girls.

**♣ Time during the week that the girls can work in mixed age groups.**

Initially reluctant to mix on the consultation day the girls did some of their most creative thinking in mixed groups.

Students at Harris Girls Academy already have a chance to mix with other year groups as older girls have the opportunity to lead activities for younger girls. A further suggestion might be that the girls have the opportunity to experience team-building activities in mixed age groups perhaps as a PHSE activity.