

Walking the Talk? Thinking and Acting - Teachers' and Practitioners' Perceptions about Physical Activity, Health and Well-Being, Do They 'Walk the Talk' ?

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Abstract : This position paper presents current research findings into the proposed gap between teachers' and practitioners' thinking and acting about physical activity health and well-being in childhood. Within the new Primary curriculum, there is a focus on sustained physical activity within a Physical Education and healthy lifestyles in Personal, Health, Social and Emotional lessons, but there is no curriculum guidance about what sustained physical activity is and how it is defined. The current health guidance on birth to five suggests that children should not be inactive for long periods and specify light and energetic activities, however there is the a suggested period of time per day for young children to achieve, but the guidance does not specify how this should be measured. The challenge therefore for teachers and practitioners is their own confidence and understanding of what "good / moderate intensity" physical activity and healthy living looks like for children and the children understanding what they are doing. There is limited research about children from birth to eight years and also the perceptions and attitudes of those who work with this age group of children, however it was found that children at times can identify different levels of activity and it has been found that children can identify healthy foods and good choices for healthy living at a basic level. Authors have also explored teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and found that teachers could act in accordance to their beliefs about their subject area only when their subject knowledge, understanding and confidence of that area is high. It has been proposed that confidence and competence of practitioners and teachers to integrate 'well-being' within the learning settings has been reported as being low. This may be due to them not having high subject knowledge. It has been suggested that children's life chances are improved by focusing on well-being in their earliest years. This includes working with parents and families, and being aware of the environmental contexts that may impact on children's wellbeing. The key is for practitioners and teachers to know how to implement these ideas effectively as these key workers have a profound effect on young children as role models and due to the time of waking hours spent with them. The position paper is part of a longitudinal study at Canterbury Christ Church University and currently we will share the research findings from the initial questionnaire (online, postal, and in person) that explored and evaluated the knowledge, competence and confidence levels of practitioners and teachers as to the structure and planning of sustained physical activity and healthy lifestyles and how this progresses with the children's age.

Keywords : health, perceptions, physical activity, well-being

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