CONTRIBUTION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RECESS TOWARDS THE OVERALL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF 8-11 YEAR OLD CHILDREN

ABSTRACT

Objectives: The purposes of this study were to objectively measure physical activity (PA) in a sample of 8-11 year olds and to establish the proportion of these children who fulfil current PA guidelines to determine to what extent PE and recess (break and lunch times) contributes to children's overall PA, with a focus on age, gender and body composition within Northern Ireland (NI).

Methods: Anthropometric and accelerometer measurements were conducted on 61 children (9.3+1.0 years) including 24 boys and 37 girls from 8 randomly selected classes. On average, children accumulated 4.8+0.6 days with valid accelerometer data (>10 hours) including 3.1+0.4 week days and 1.7+0.5 weekend days. Data for this study were collected between April to June 2015.

Results: Children accumulated 63.3±18.2 minutes in MVPA (daily) compared to 61.3+23.4 minutes (PE day) and 63.0+22.5 minutes (Non-PE day). This would indicate that children were not significantly (P > 0.05) more active on PE days compared to Non-PE days. Interestingly, PE only contributed to 6.4% of children's overall MVPA, while break time (morning recess) and lunchtime (afternoon recess) contributed to 18.7% and 18.4% respectively. This would indicate, there was a significant difference (P < 0.05) in the percentage of time spent in MVPA that all children participated in during PE classes compared to both break time and lunch time MVPA.

Discussion/Conclusions: Results indicate that more than half (54.1%) of children are attaining
the daily guidelines of > 60 minutes of MVPA. Moreover, PE and recess (break and lunch time) contributed to almost half (43.5%) of children's total MVPA. Overall, the boys spent a higher proportion of the time in MVPA during scheduled PE classes, break time (morning recess) and lunchtime (recess) in comparison to the girls in this study. It would appear that PE lessons and recess (break and lunch time) provide important occasions for children to be engaged in PA. However, children are more active at break time and lunch time than they are during scheduled PE classes in this study. This clearly demonstrates that the school setting is a viable option for the delivering PA for many of our children.

KEY WORDS

Children, Physical Activity, Physical Education and Recess.