

CULTURE HEALTH COMMUNITIES ACTIVITY CHALLENGE

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Prepared by Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence

IN TERM 2 2014 NINE SCHOOLS IN NSW COMPETED IN THE PILOT OF THE CULTURE HEALTH COMMUNITIES ACTIVITY CHALLENGE. BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS FROM THE EVALUATION OF THE CHALLENGE.



What was the Challenge?

The Activity Challenge was a program run by NSW Health and NSW Rugby League that aimed to get primary school students more physically active. The key elements of the Challenge were:

- **Pedometers:** Each student was given a pedometer to record their steps during school hours. Steps were recorded in a guidebook, and entered onto the Challenge website.
- **Online journey:** Via the website, the class pedometer data was linked to an online 'journey'. When the class achieved step targets, the class's position on the Activity Challenge course map was updated, and videos were unlocked. The videos featured the students' personal avatars visiting locations around Australia and the world with well-known Aboriginal National Rugby League (NRL) players as their guides. The guides spoke about the cultural significance of the location and key health messages.
- **Prizes:** Classes were ranked based on their average daily steps throughout the program. At the end of the Challenge, monetary prizes for the purchase of school equipment were awarded to the first, second and third placed classes.



What was measured in the evaluation?

There were three evaluation questions:

1. What was the impact of the program on students' levels of physical activity?
2. What were the other benefits of the program at the individual and school level?
3. Was the program implemented in participating schools as intended?

These were answered by:

- **Physical activity data:** Data entered onto the Challenge website was used to measure students' daily steps and levels of moderate to vigorous physical activity. Information on age, gender, school, and Aboriginal status was also collected.
- **Physical activity survey:** Before and after the Challenge, students completed a survey on their levels of physical activity and sedentary behaviour. Sedentary behaviour was measured by the amount of time students spent in front of TV, mobiles, iPads and computers each day.
- **Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with class teachers and program implementation staff.
- **Classroom discussion:** Students' experiences were explored through a classroom-based discussion led by an Aboriginal researcher.



Who participated in the Challenge?

- 318 students participated in 15 classes from 9 different schools across NSW.
- There were an equal number of boys and girls (159 each).
- The average age was 11 years. The youngest student was 8 years and the oldest was 13 years.
- Most students were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (57%)



What were the results?

- **Physical Activity:** There was a slight but statistically significant increase in students' physical activity levels after the Challenge compared to before the Challenge.
- **Sedentary behaviour:** Students' screen time on weekend days decreased, from 3.2 hours before the Challenge to 2.7 hours post-Challenge. There was no change for weekday screen time.
- **Other benefits:** Teachers reported improvements in a range of areas during the Challenge, including increased school attendance, improved teamwork and improved classroom behaviour. Some comments from teachers are shown below.

“
They liked the competition and that helped them to strive for more steps every day, to set higher goals.”

“
I was overwhelmed by engagement ... kids were turning up a lot earlier than normal to pick up their pedometers.”

“
[Students were] working with part of the team and encouraging each other ... and being good sportspeople.”



Results for each school

Note: We are not able to name the schools that participated in the Challenge; this is a requirement of the ethics approval for our evaluation of the Challenge

School	Class	Average daily steps
School 1	5	11562
School 2	6	11390
School 1	5/6	11236
School 3	5/6	11159
School 4	5/6	10917
School 1	6	10859
School 2	5/6	10141
School 5	5/6	10099
School 2	5/6	9952
School 6	4/5/6	9900
School 7	5/6	9180
School 8	5/6	9076
School 9	6	7166
School 9	5	6547
School 4	5/6	5925
Total average		9674



What does this mean?

In summary, during the Activity Challenge, students decreased their screen time and slightly increased their levels of physical activity. Students and teachers also reported a range of other benefits of the Challenge. The findings from this pilot project will inform the future development of strategies to increase physical activity among children.

Thank you to all the schools that participated in the Activity Challenge and the evaluation!

For further information about the evaluation of the Activity Challenge please contact: Erin Passmore, Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, on (02) 9391 9770 or epass@doh.health.nsw.gov.au