

# The Impact of Brain Breaks on Student Engagement in the Elementary Classroom

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## Research Question

How do brain breaks  
impact elementary  
students  
engagement?

# Supporting Literature

There are three types of engagement: emotional, behavioral, and cognitive (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, Friedel, and Paris, 2004)

Benefits of physical activity in the classroom include improvement in student mood, energy level, and learning (Lorson, Lyon, Minoughan, and Orlowski, 2013)

99.1% of teachers believed that it was important for children to receive opportunities for physical activity during the day, either during an academic lesson or a brain break (Dinkel, Lee, and Schaffer, 2016)

The sacrifice of small amounts of time, usually used for instruction, to incorporate physical activity are worth it as these breaks improve the overall attentiveness of our students (Camahalan and Ipock, 2015)

# Methodology

- 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom located in West Bloomington, IL
- Fall semester of the 2020-21 school year
- Primarily remote teaching during the semester
- 21 students

# Background

- **Brain breaks:** periods of time during a school day that students are provided that do not involve academics
- Implementation of breaks began at the beginning of October
- 10 different breaks were utilized throughout the semester
  - Physical exercise, YouTube videos, Community questions, etc.
- One break per day, usually facilitated at the same time each day

# Data Collected

- Field notes
  - Taken before, during, and after each brain break was facilitated
  - Used to describe student engagement and behavior at each time period
- Reflections
  - Written at the end of each school day regarding the impact of the break on that particular day
- Student surveys
  - Used to allow students to have a voice in which breaks we do, allowed me to see which breaks that students thought were most effective for them
  - Three types of questions: (1) Which break was your favorite from this week? (2) Why was it your favorite? (3) How did you feel after this break?

# Results

## Themes

**Theme 1:** Brain breaks pulled student engagement back into the school day

**Theme 2:** Students began to look forward to the breaks they knew would occur each day

**Theme 3:** Game-like breaks were the most effective and engaging for the students

## Limitations

- Only some students were noted about within the anecdotal records due to consent
- Not many consent forms returned due to their online format
- Breaks were facilitated within the remote environment and notes were taken on behavior which occurred within the home, a more distracting environment than the classroom

# Conclusions

- Teachers should work to incorporate physical activity as much as possible during the school day
- Physical activity does not only help our kinesthetic learners, it helps all students remain attentive and engaged
- Strong classroom management guidelines must be set before the implementation of consistent physical activity
- Further research recommendations
  - Examine the impact of physical activity on peer interaction and classroom community
  - Compare the ways in which physical activity impacts student engagement in an in-person environment to a virtual environment



Questions?

# References

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