Run2B: A Piloted Youth Running Program
Timothy Baghurst, PhD

The primary purpose of this initiative was to develop and implement a city-wide running program for youth in first through fifth grade as a pilot program to determine whether it could improve participants’ sprint speed, fitness levels, and self-concept. As a pilot, a secondary purpose was to evaluate the successes and failures of the program to better understand how similar initiatives could use best-practices to develop their own programs.

Participants were 27 (10 male, 17 female) youth in first through fifth grade enrolled in Stillwater schools as well as children who were homeschooled. Participants enrolled in a running program advertised as Run2B which lasted for four weeks during the spring on a Tuesday and Thursday after school. Participants completed a series of tests at the beginning and end of the program including four sprint trials of 20 meters, the Fitnessgram PACER test, and the Self-Description Questionnaire-I, which was employed to assess multidimensional self-concept.

Both the first and last sessions were dedicated to testing where each participant completed the Pacer test, the four 20 meter sprints, and the SDQ-I. Therefore, six sessions were dedicated to training, where the focus was on developing overall fitness, sprint speed, and having fun in the process. Each training session lasted 50 minutes and began with a general warm-up period which consisted of approximately 5 minutes of small games activities. This was followed by approximately 5 minutes of a sport-specific warm-up which transitioned into four separate work stations which lasted approximately eight minutes each. These stations varied depending on the day, but in each session one station focused on running technique, another on fitness, another on speed, and a final station that emphasized game activities. Stations were taught by university physical education students and graduate students in health and human performance.

Participants significantly improved their standing start spring and Pacer distances. Participants’ SQDI posttest scores were higher than pretest scores on all subscale measures including Physical Appearance (4.05; 4.51), Physical Ability (4.31; 4.44), Peer Relations (3.55; 3.87), and General Self (4.33; 4.50).

Although these findings are encouraging, circumstances during the program occurred which may have altered these results. Such factors included the weather, the duration of the event, how recruitment occurred, and the motivation of the participant versus the parent. Therefore, although findings indicate that short-term activity programs can be successful in multiple areas of health, best-practices can improve their overall effectiveness.