



of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

## **AAHPERD RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAM AWARD 1998**

### **Promoting Parental Involvement in Physical Education**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Many studies have indicated that children of active parents tend to be more active than children of inactive parents, yet intervention studies on promoting parent involvement have generally been unsuccessful. The purpose of this study was to test the effectiveness of an intervention designed to promote parental involvement in elementary physical education.

The study was based on an expectancy-value model of Eccles and Harold which suggests that parent socialization behaviors are determined by parents' values and expectancies toward a given behavior. Thus, intervention materials were developed specifically to influence parents' values and expectancies toward children's physical activity. Four schools from the same district were matched by socioeconomic status and randomized into treatment and control conditions. Families with children in grades 3-6 were targeted for the intervention. Parents from the two treatment schools received eight weekly newsletters on the importance of activity for children and an activity log to complete with their child. Parents from the two control schools received a more generic fitness and health newsletter.

To evaluate the intervention, parents completed pre- and post-assessments of value, expectancies and socialization behaviors (role modeling, involvement, facilitation and encouragement), as well as noted their attraction to physical activity (Brustad) and perceptions of competence (Harter). A total of 224 child-parent pairs had complete data for both trials (22% of sample). A two-way (school x trial) repeated measures analysis of variance was performed for each of the ten outcome variables. There was a significant school by trial interaction for parent expectancies, but no other interactions were significant. Main effects for the trials were significant for two of the other nine outcome variables, indicating that the control materials and the treatment materials may have had similar effects.

There are several possible explanations for the minimal effects of the intervention. One possible explanation is that more time may be needed to promote changes in attitudes and behavior in parents. Child perceptions of parent's attitudes were more predictive of parent support than the parent's perceptions, suggesting that parental influence is mediated through changes in the child's belief system. Another possibility is that parents already have generally favorable attitudes, but lack the resources or time to act on their intentions. Thus, a ceiling effect may make it difficult to alter attitudes. The implications for further refinement of parental socialization interventions should be investigated.