

Abstract**Background:**

There are currently many programs aimed at increasing the physical activity levels of preschool students enrolled in childcare centers. For most, the changes in MET levels have not been determined, making the efficacy of these programs unknown. The current study sought to measure the activity levels of Head Start children under the I Am Moving I Am Learning (IM/IL) approach before and after the addition of the Coordinated Approach to Child Health for Early Childhood (CATCH) curriculum.

Methods:

This eight week intervention study used accelerometry to measure the activity levels of children aged 3-5. Children were observed in four Head Start centers for 7 hours over 2 days before and after implementation of the CATCH curriculum. MET levels were linked at one-minute intervals with child activity codes recorded by observers.

Results:

The average MET level per minute for the children at baseline was $2.77 \pm .50$ and at follow up was $2.81 \pm .45$ (ns). There was a significant difference in the time spent in teacher guided physical activity at baseline (28.73 ± 29.4) versus follow up (53.88 ± 35.49) ($p = .0004$). Teachers reported that language barriers and a short classroom implementation period made it difficult to implement the program completely. Teachers rated the CATCH curriculum higher than the IM/IL approach in terms of feasibility and acceptance among the children.

Conclusion:

These results indicate that the current IM/IL approach does not increase PA levels of Head Start children and further research is needed to identify other methods to do so.

Keywords:

“Physical Activity,” “CATCH,” “Head Start”