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Does Health Class Affect Students' Decision Making?

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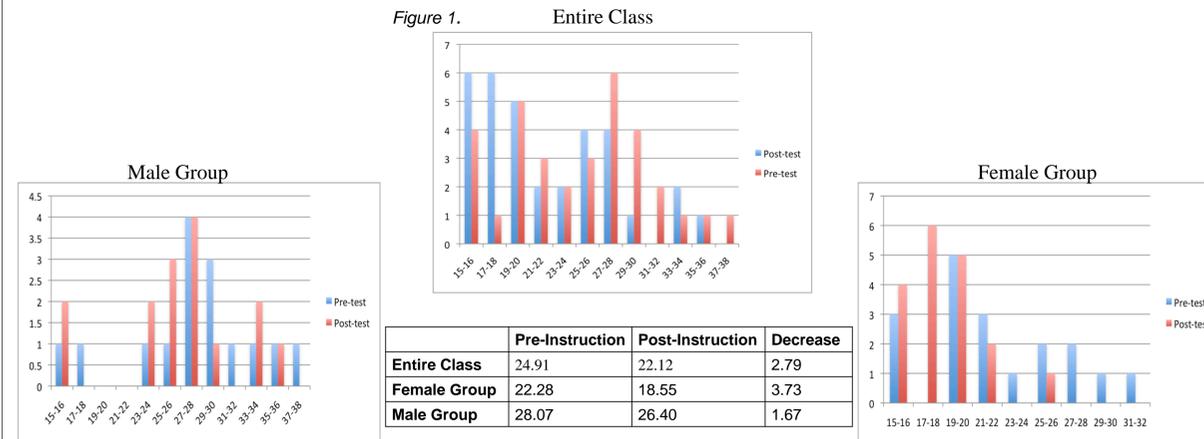
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Introduction

The purpose of this research is to determine the effectiveness of the high school health education class by surveying the students of the class at the beginning and again at the end after they have gone through the material of the class. Since health education is a one semester stand alone curriculum, it is important that teachers use their time appropriately and effectively. The survey given to the students will analyze and determine if the students of the class are making poor life style decisions and/or engaging in risky behaviors. The questions of the survey cover topics that span the entirety of the health education class. From nutrition and diet choices to sexual health behaviors. It is emphasized to the students of the class that the survey they will be participating in is completely anonymous and the responses that they provide will not be used for against them in any way, but simply for educational purposes. The only information that the student will have to provide about themselves on the survey is if they are male or female. The survey will be taken and submitted electronically and the data will compiled and analyzed. The data will be looked at in three forms. First as a whole class and then separated into males response and female response. The survey that the class took contained 50 questions, each of the questions or statements asked about a poor life style habit or risky behavior and whether the students have engaged in these activities or not. The data collected will be presented on how many students responded 'yes' to the questions.

Data

Data collection for this research project was done at a public high school in Northwest suburbs of Illinois where my student teaching took place. The charts below show how many poor life style decisions and risky behaviors students are engaging in. *Figure 1* shows the pre and post-instruction survey results for the whole class in the study. *Figure 2* shows the pre and post-instruction survey results for the males group. *Figure 3* shows the pre and post-instruction survey results for the female group.



Analysis

- The data indicates that the students of the class had a decrease in risky behaviors and poor life style decisions by 2.79 questions on average.
- The female group showed a decrease of 3.73 in answering questions about engaging in risky behaviors or poor life style choices.
- The male group showed a decrease of 1.67 in answering questions about engaging in risky behaviors or poor life style choices.
- Tobacco use based questions had the most significant change in student response decreasing by _____.
- Alcohol use based questions had a small amount of change in student response decreasing by _____.
- Illicit drug use based questions received higher amounts of student response increasing by _____.



Background and Theory

Class Demographics

- There are 33 students in the class: 18 females & 15 males.
- The class has students ranging from ages 14-18 years old.
- Four of the students in the class have either an IEP or a 504 plan.

Health Education Surcey

- The pre and post survey will be the same, questions in randomized order.
- Taken online and stored online and is completely anonymous. Students only have to report their gender.

Purpose of analyzing curriculum effectiveness

- With only one semester to present high school health education, teachers need to meet the learning needs of their students and cover a broad variety of material in a short time.
- Health education deals with real life and practical topics that are important to students of this age. Students need to know this information and why it is important to their well being.

Results

After reviewing the results of the survey, I further examined alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug based questions. Figures 6, 7, and 8 represent student response on the pre-survey, while figures 9, 10, and 11 show the change in student Response after their time in the health education class.

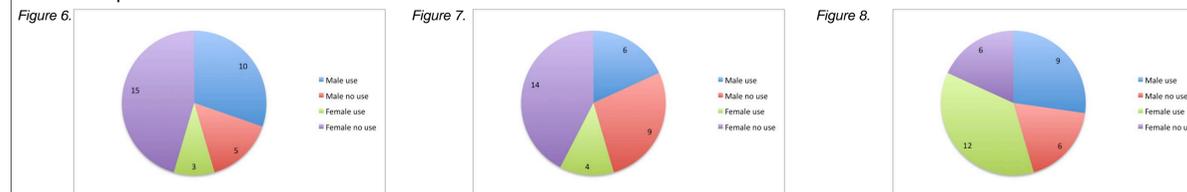
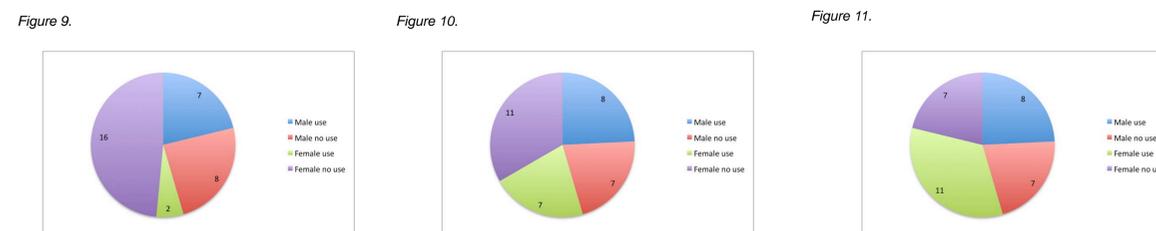


Figure 6 & 9— Tobacco use questions: the pie graph shows the greatest change in student use, especially male use.

Figure 7 & 10 — Illicit drug use questions: the pie graph actually shows an increase in student use, both male and female after having taken health education.

Figure 8 & 11 — Alcohol use questions: the pie graphs show a slight decrease in student use of alcohol by both males and females.



Conclusions

- Overall the results of the survey showed that the curriculum was effective in lowering the scores of the students on risky behaviors and poor life style decisions.
 - The data on the survey indicate the curriculum was more effective towards the female group than it was for the male group.
 - Further examination at questions specific to tobacco and alcohol showed a decrease in student use, while questions specific to illicit drug use actually increased from the pre-survey scores.
 - While the data of the survey showed a decrease it student use/ participation in the behaviors, the numbers are still high across the board on how many students engage in these activities.
 - For future health education classes, the teachers should keep the tobacco and alcohol units similar to what they have, but need to make changes to the illicit drug unit.
- Further Questions/Research**
- Would the students benefit and show a decrease in risky behavior by having health be a full year curriculum?
 - Does the health curriculum need to be changed to be relevant to today's students?

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