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Does Health Class Affect Students' Decision Making?

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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.

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 1.87 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 ______.

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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