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Does Breakfast Club Attendance Influence Behaviour?



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Background

School breakfast club attendance has been found to lead to improvements in children's cognition, academic performance, nutrition and behaviour (for a review, see Murphy, 2007); and more recently the quality of children's friendships (Defeyter et al, 2009).

Although anecdotal evidence suggests that breakfast club helps to prepare children for the school day, no studies to date have considered whether children's behaviour alters across the breakfast club session.

Observational Study

Method:

Participants:

232 children aged between 7 and 11 years (mean=8:2; range=7:1-11:3; 145 females and 87 males) were observed across 75 breakfast club sessions.

Measures:

Children's behaviour was observed and recorded during the first and last five minutes of the breakfast club sessions. Behaviour was recorded according to 4 criteria: perceived classroom noise, level of excitability, number of positive and number of negative incidents of behaviour.



Results

Total scores for each behaviour at the beginning and end of the sessions were collapsed across 75 observations. The total scores at the beginning of the breakfast club sessions were compared to those at the end.

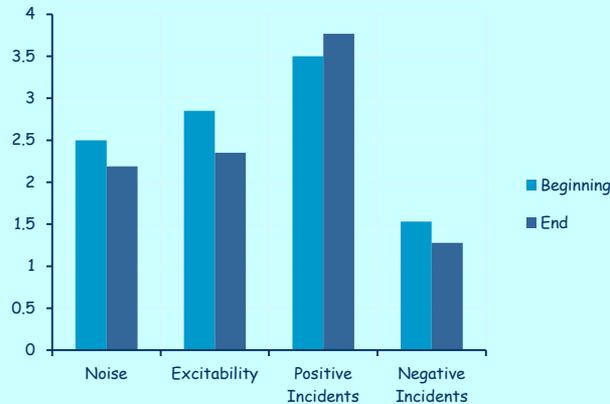


Figure 1: Total mean scores for behaviours observed across breakfast club sessions

Analysis revealed:

- A significant decrease in perceived classroom noise across the breakfast club sessions ($t(74) = 2.18, p = 0.03$)
- A significant decrease in the level of excitable behaviour across the breakfast club sessions ($t(74) = 2.96, p = 0.004$)
- A significant increase in the number of positive incidents of behaviour across the breakfast club sessions ($t(74) = 2.21, p = 0.03$)
- A significant decrease in the number of negative incidents of behaviour across the breakfast club sessions ($t(74) = 2.47, p = 0.016$)

Summary and Conclusions

The results from the present study demonstrate that children's behaviour changes significantly across the breakfast club session with children displaying more positive behaviour and appearing quieter and less excitable at the end of the session than at the beginning.

The current findings provide support for prior anecdotal evidence from teachers, which suggests that breakfast club attendance has a positive influence on children's behaviour.



References

- Defeyter, M.A. (November, 2008). Benefits of breakfast clubs: Cognitive and Social Outcomes. Paper presented at the 9th National Nutrition and Health conference, Olympia conference centre, London, UK.
- Murphy, J. M. (2007). Breakfast and Learning: An Updated Review. *Current Nutrition and Food Science*, 3, 3-36.