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# UMass Boston and Dever School: Supporting At-Risk Youth through Physical Activity

Laura A. Hayden

*University of Massachusetts Boston, [laura.hayden@umb.edu](mailto:laura.hayden@umb.edu)*

Amy L. Cook

*University of Massachusetts Boston, [amy.cook@umb.edu](mailto:amy.cook@umb.edu)*

Meghan R. Silva

*University of Massachusetts Boston*

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# UMass Boston and Dever School: Supporting At-Risk Youth through Physical Activity

## Summary

Given the consistently poor academic performances of Latino English Language Learners (ELL) students, coupled with the known academic and behavioral benefits of physical activity, we implemented a culturally sensitive physical activity-based intervention designed to develop responsibility through movement among ELL Latina 5<sup>th</sup> graders. Two UMass Boston professors and four graduate students partnered with faculty at the Dever School to deliver this strength-based intervention.

## Goals and Objectives

To strengthen the partnership between UMass Boston's Department of Counseling and School Psychology and the Dever School

To provide a strength-based approach to empowering youth to make healthy decisions

To incorporate development of personal and social responsibility with physical activity, in hopes of simultaneously increasing academic achievement

## Results/Impacts

Thematic analysis suggests the intervention was both well received by the participants and successful in teaching them personal and social responsibility within the program, while teaching them how to transfer what they learned to the classroom setting.

Students indicated *feeling supported, having fun, and receiving help* in developing personal and social responsibility.

Students indicated developing *respect, effort, self-direction, and a capacity to care* within the program.

Students identified transferring these responsibilities into the classroom, especially *effort* toward their school work and the *capacity to care* for others, including their teachers.

## Approaches and Methods

Students and UMass graduate students engaged in co-created physical activity sessions twice a week for 45 minutes, including a discussion focused on integrating personal and social responsibility

Thematic analysis was used to explore and understand how participants made sense of their experiences within the program

## Conclusion/Next Steps

Given our long standing relationship with the Dever School, the next steps include:

1. Expand the program to serve more students than just 5<sup>th</sup> grade ELL Latina youth
2. Explore ways to involve teachers and parents in the partnership
3. Incorporate behavioral measures to ascertain actual transfer of responsibilities to the classroom

## References and Resources

Cook, A. L., & Hayden, L. A. (2012). Obesity prevention among Latino youth: School counselors' role in promoting healthy lifestyles. *Professional School Counseling Journal*, 16(1), 7-17.

Hellison, D. (2003). *Teaching responsibility through physical activity*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

## Partnership Information

Laura A. Hayden, Amy L. Cook, & Meghan R. Silva, *Counseling and School Psychology, College of Education and Human Development, UMass Boston*

Pamela Belford, *City Connects, Dever-McCormack*  
Principal Michael Sabin, *Dever-McCormack*