Report to

The Community Initiatives Program, Government of Alberta

from

Dr. Larry Katz, Sport Technology Research Lab
Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary

Project Name:

**Fun Innovative Time (F.I.T.) Breaks for Elementary School Students**

Grant Number: C2025740

- Name of Registered Charity: The University of Calgary
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Development Team

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Joanne Helm, PhD, Calgary Board of Education

In addition to the recommended format, this report includes project content, dissemination of research and materials, project model and manual cover (see Appendix).

**Outcomes**

In order to improve the health and wellness of elementary students in Calgary, teachers and students from 20 Calgary schools were introduced to Fun Innovative Time (F.I.T.) Breaks. Through F.I.T. Breaks, students were taught about themes, music, and choreography. Students created their own themes, chose the music, and choreographed their activities. This preparation enabled them to lead their classmates in active movements to the music that was performed in the classroom beside student desks. These breaks were designed to re-energize the students. Through these activities, students used a combination of music and activity to improve their health, elevate their moods and help them bond with classmates, all of which resulted in a more positive attitude toward learning. Teachers worked with students to schedule short (one song) breaks during the week. Participants took leadership roles in their classes and learned that natural athletic abilities are not necessary for physical activity to be enjoyable. Moreover, students collaborated in choosing the music and designing the break. Creativity and the development of a positive self-concept were encouraged during the process.

In addition to working with students and teachers, the development team used the experience and feedback to develop a Teacher’s Guide to F.I.T. Breaks called:
F.I.T. Breaks: Fun Innovative Time for the Classroom Environment. In addition to the Teachers Manual, the team developed a CD-Audio disk to accompany the manual and a DVD-Video Disk to provide examples of F.I.T. Breaks.

**Impact**

Ninety percent of Canadian kids do not get anywhere near the amount of exercise required for healthy development. Thirty percent of Canadian children are also overweight or obese.

Recent research studies that show that little bursts of activity can stabilize blood sugar levels, and this in turn can make a big difference in improving student concentration and can help students focus on their schoolwork.

FIT Breaks are short duration, easy to use, allow the students in the classroom to be active, and use their imagination without leaving the vicinity of their desks. FIT Breaks only require a CD-Audio player and music.

Teachers and students who participated in the trials are very excited about participating in FIT Breaks so we anticipate that many schools will be adopting this program and it should have widespread appeal. It should help improve students attitudes towards physical activity and are an inexpensive, fun way to introduce a little more physical activity and energy expenditure into the school day.

**Sustainability**

The project is self-sustaining and will be made available to interested individuals through a variety of channels. Ten free copies will be provided to both the Calgary Public and Separate school boards. A website is being built to publicize the program, and a number of companies have expressed interest in carrying the program. Researchers involved in the development have agreed to publicize the program at conferences for teachers.

**Project Contents**

The contents of the package include a Teachers Manual, a CD-Audio and a DVD-Video as described below:

**Teachers Manual**

The manual contains: Overview, FIT Break Model, Themes (including art work), Scripts, Music Suggestions, Choreography, Guidelines, Lyrics, and Evaluation Guide.
CD-Audio Songs

**Song**
- Surfing USA
- Hockey Song
- Splish Splash
- Chicken Dance
- Secret Agent Spies
- We Call Them Pirates Out Here
- Ping Island/Lightning Strike Rescue Op
- Chariots of Fire
- I heard it through the Grape Vine
- I got you (I feel good) - James Brown
- Winter Games

**Mechanical**
- EMI Music Canada
- Crown-Vetch Music
- September Music Corp
- Paul Finkelman
- CMRAA
- Universal

**Master**
- OLE
- Stompin Tom Limited
- Paul Finkelman
- Rosalind
- CMRAA
- Universal

**DVD-Video**

Example of Teacher Lead FIT Breaks
Example of Student Lead FIT Breaks

**FIT Break Press Conference and Press Release**

A press conference was held at the Calgary Jewish Academy on Friday June 13, 2008 to announce the upcoming release of the F.I.T. Break Program. The story was carried in the University of Calgary Press, the Calgary Herald, CBC Television, CBC Radio (Interview), City TV and Shaw Television.

**Research**

Development of the F.I.T. Breaks manual included research on teacher use and student attitudes. More research is ongoing and dissemination of information on the use of F.I.T. Breaks is a high priority. The following research work has been published.


Doctoral Thesis:

Masters Paper:

Learning

It became clear that teachers will only use a resource if it is easy to use and accessible. We needed to provide both the training material, the lesson plans, and the music to get the teachers involved. We also found that the acquisition of copyrights for music and lyrics was both extremely time consuming for our staff and more expensive to purchase that we originally thought.

Recognition

The Community Initiatives Program support was much appreciated and is recognize on both videos and in the manual as well as in advertising of the project and product. In the press release, funding from the Community Initiatives Program was acknowledged. The Community Initiatives Program and its logo feature prominently in the manual and other resources associated with the project.
The Sport Technology Research Laboratory received $28,000 from the Community Initiatives Program. The Expenditures from that grant are listed below.

### F.I.T. Break Budget

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<th>Expenses</th>
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* Tentative Expenses as not yet finalized
APPENDIX

F.I.T. BREAKS
FUN INNOVATIVE TIME FOR THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Teacher Manual

Larry Katz
Tish Doyle Baker
Fredy Iuni
Joanne Heim
FIT Break Model
PRESS RELEASE

Little Breaks – Big Impact
F.I.T. Breaks help teachers “sneak” a little more physical activity into the day!

The Beachboys’ song Surfin’ USA rings through a grade 2 Calgary class room and, despite the rain outside, inside it’s all sunny California as the kids twist, hop, jump, “hang10” and paddle their way through a 3-minute surfing adventure.

Dr. Larry Katz watches the fun with a smile and says, “You have to lose the notion that the only physical activity worth promoting in schools is a one hour gym class. There are many ways to ‘sneak’ a little more daily movement into every day.”
Canada’s latest report card on kids and activity is out and, as usual, we aren’t doing well. Ninety percent of Canadian kids don’t get anywhere near the amount of exercise required for healthy development. Not surprisingly, statistics also indicate that 30% of Canadian kids are also overweight or obese.

This is where F.I.T. Breaks (fun innovative time) comes in. *F.I.T. Breaks* is a new book, DVD, and CD audio package developed by Katz, an educational psychologist, and Kinesiology researcher and children’s fitness expert, Dr. Tish Doyle-Baker. The idea is fairly straightforward: children listen to a piece of music then a couple of “student leaders” create an imaginative adventure with movement and lead the kids through it.

“There are several recent research studies that show that little bursts of activity can stabilize blood sugar levels and this in turn can make a big difference in improving kids concentration and keeping them focused when they return to regular schoolwork” says Katz. The other important benefit is that it provides an avenue for creativity and imaginative play and encourages the students to work together as a fun team, and develops leadership skills.”

Doyle-Baker points out that this kind of incremental approach to fitness can have a big payoff. A recent study done by the University of British Columbia called “Bounce at the Bell” had children jump up and down every time the bell rang at school. This simple jumping activity was shown to increase bone density by the end of term.

“Again, I don’t want to say we’ve solved the lack of physical activity and obesity crisis,” says Katz with a laugh, “but, at the end of the day it’s an inexpensive, fun way to sneak a little more movement and energy expenditure into the day. It fires up the kids’ imaginations, develops leadership skills and improves the class-room dynamic all of which supports learning. The teachers and kids we’ve worked with so far, love it – and I think everyone who uses it will have the same experience.”

This innovative program (book/DVD/CD) is being distributed through Savvy Knowledge Systems Corporation:  [www.savvyknowledge.com](http://www.savvyknowledge.com).

The research and development of F.I.T. Breaks was supported by grants from the Calgary Foundation and the Community Initiatives Program (Government of Alberta).