



Building a wellness trail at Innovation Academy

“How can we implement wellness in students at IA?”

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Hypothesis:

My hypothesis is that the wellness trail will boost mental and physical wellbeing and reduce stress.

Introduction:

There is a lack of wellness in American high schools, which causes a decrease in performance and lack of happiness in students. Students don't have a wellness mechanism, which bottles up their stress and a decrease in academic performance. I took this issue into my hands and created the idea of making a wellness trail based on research of wellness from the United States and Europe. The creation of a wellness trail would aid in increasing physical and mental wellness, which will relieve stress of students which increase academic performance.

Methodology:

The methodology for this research project is a series of surveys per each activity and for the entire wellness trail. I have conducted simulations with two classes of research. This allowed students to express how effective the trail would potentially be and participate in the activities that were used in the simulations. The prototyping allowed me to gauge interest in this experiment and to change the activities based on the extensive feedback of my peers and teachers.

Background:

Mental Wellness in Schools

Mental wellness has become a critical issue in educational environments, with increasing stress levels negatively impacting student performance and overall happiness (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). The modern academic environment especially the education system in the United States often puts achievement over wellbeing, leading to burnout and less motivation with students.

The Science Behind Wellness Trails

Wellness trails combine physical activity with mindfulness practices, offering a multimodal approach to stress reduction. Research shows that: Small amounts of physical activity breaks improve cognitive function and emotional regulation (Tandfonline, 2023). Exposure to nature and green spaces reduces cortisol levels by up to 15% (BMC Public Health, 2019). Structured wellness programs in schools have shown to increase student engagement by 22% (MyMichiganWellness Trail Guide, 2022).

Results:

100% of students reported that their stress levels decreased after participating in a prototype of the activities which ranged from breathing exercises to stretching to mindfulness. This simulation was done with two classes of research and several teachers. One important factor to note is that we participated in these activities inside the building. When we move these activities outdoors, this will only increase the positive outcomes for all students.

Reflection:

Over the months spent on this project, I have felt enjoyment, and I have discovered that this is what I am interested in. I am looking forward to continuing work on this initiative next year. I would like to acknowledge Mrs. Armstrong, Mrs. Polk, Mrs. Paxton, Mr. Denato, and my family for supporting me through this year. During this project, I have learned to deal with setbacks, but now, I am happy to present my research and the need for a wellness trail at Innovation Academy.

Sources:

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