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## A Qualitative Study of Middle School Students' Perceptions of Unstructured Time

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A Qualitative Study of Middle School  
Students' Perceptions of Unstructured Time

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Master of Occupational Therapy  
Grand Valley State University

2013

**A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
UNSTRUCTURED TIME**

By

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**MASTER OF SCIENCE RESEARCH PROJECT**

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2013

**RESEARCH COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**OBJECTIVE:** The purpose of this study was to identify middle school students' perceptions of unstructured time by determining physical and leisure activities the students would want to have available for their use at school.

**METHOD:** A researcher developed questionnaire (Students' Leisure Time Questionnaire) was used to interview 23 middle school students (ages 11 to 15) regarding their perceptions of activities during unstructured time. A phenomenological design was used, incorporating open-ended qualitative questions.

**RESULTS:** The students were able to identify activities in which they would like to participate during their unstructured time at school. Students primarily indicated football and basketball as preferred physical activities and listening to music as a preferred leisure activity. The available resources for student use were limited to a basketball, basketball court, and a football which may have affected the students' responses.

**CONCLUSION:** The results of this study could be used to implement a program that would allow students to participate in activities that they identified during the interviews. By incorporating the students' preferences into a new program, an occupational therapist may be able to more effectively engage the students in activities that are motivating and engaging for students.

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## Definition of Terms

**Leisure Activity:** Leisure activity is defined as an activity that people are not obligated to participate in but engage in for enjoyment (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2008).

**Physical Activity:** Physical activity is defined as engaging the body in movement that works the muscles and uses more energy than when the body is at rest (“World Health Organization,” 2011).

**Middle School Student:** A middle school student is defined as an adolescent between the ages of 9 and 14 (“Cambridge Dictionaries,” 2011).

**Unstructured Time:** Unstructured time is defined as the time of day when students choose which activities to participate in for ease and relaxation (“Dictionary,” 2011).

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Students throughout the United States of America enter middle school around 12 years of age. This age group is often associated with becoming more independent and determining how to associate with their peers and within new environments. The transition into independence can be challenging as some students adjust easily and develop a strong group of friends, while others have difficulty adjusting to adolescence. These behaviors can be displayed throughout the school day, as well as at home, during the students' structured and unstructured time. During the school day, structured time consists of students attending classes and interacting with teachers; unstructured time occurs when students have the choice of which activity to participate in, and primarily takes place before school begins and during lunch ("National Association for Sport and Physical Education," 2008a). Although it would appear that students' time at school is structured, some of the time is not. The purpose of this research study was to assist a West Michigan middle school's staff to identify how enrolled students want to spend their unstructured time during the school day.

### **Background to Problem and Context**

The physical and leisure activities middle school students would like to be available during their unstructured time at school has not been extensively researched. Middle school students may have limited opportunities to engage in physical and leisure activities while at school which could lead to problematic behaviors and a decrease in overall health ("U.S. Department of Health & Human Services," 2008). Limited opportunities for engagement could be due to a lack of school funds and a shortage of available resources or equipment for the students to use to participate in physical and leisure activity. The school may also have limited means to incorporate physical and leisure activity throughout the school day. This may be due to

state laws that mandate how many hours students have to be in academic classes each school day as well as fewer staff to supervise the students during their unstructured time (“Department of Health and Human Services,” 2008).

Due to state guidelines, middle school students are required to be in classes for a specific amount of time throughout the day. These guidelines limit the time students have available to participate in preferred physical and leisure activities. This study determined what leisure activities middle school students at a West Michigan middle school would like to be available during their unstructured time. These leisure activities included, but were not limited to, writing poetry, journaling, listening to music, playing board or card games, reading, or talking with friends. The researchers were not only interested in leisure activities but physical activities as well.

The researchers reviewed national and state guidelines for physical activity for middle school students. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, middle school students should participate in 60 minutes or more of physical activity every day (2008). The 60 minutes of physical activity may be incorporated during both structured and unstructured times throughout the school day. Allowing students the choice in activity involvement permits social interaction as well as an increase in their activity skills.

These activity skills develop during unstructured time, but also throughout structured time for physical activities. During structured time, physical education is offered at schools to allow students access to physical activity. National standards provide guidelines for physical education and physical activities for middle school students. These recommendations for physical activity state that middle school students should be physically active for at least 15 minutes a day in order to maximize their opportunity for improved health, wellness, and fitness

(“National Association for Sport and Physical Education,” 2008c). There are also national standard recommendations for physical education. These include regular participation in physical activity and maintaining or increasing the overall level of physical fitness. Other national standards for physical education suggest that adolescent students should be able to demonstrate appropriate behavior, self-respect, as well as respect towards others. Students should also be encouraged to value physical activity because it improves health, provides enjoyment and a challenge, in addition to allowing for social interaction (“National Association for Sport and Physical Education,” 2008b).

The State of Michigan provides guidelines for physical education and activities for children based on age groups. By the end of eighth grade, students should know how to follow rules and procedures as well as understand safe practices and ethical behaviors. Physical education allows students an opportunity for social interaction and the ability to reflect on the benefits of physical activity (“Michigan Department of Education,” 2007). If students at a West Michigan middle school have this understanding when they continue to high school, then the school is achieving the needed standards. However, if resources are limited, students may have difficulty achieving this level of physical activity and valuing the benefits of the activity.

According to the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (2008), occupational therapists are interested in the various types of life activities in which people participate. Some of these life activities include activities of daily living, education, work, play, and leisure (“American Occupational Therapy Association,” 2008). Since occupational therapists are knowledgeable about adolescent development as well as play and leisure, they understand the importance of students’ engaging in activity during their unstructured time at school. For this

study, the researchers identified the types of activities middle school students would like to be available during their unstructured time at school.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem addressed in this research study was that middle school students may not have access to necessary resources to engage in physical or leisure activity during their unstructured time at school. These resources included equipment and space that students could use to engage in activities. Without such resources, students may not have the opportunity to engage in physical or leisure activities.

### **Purpose/Aims**

A West Michigan middle school requested research to be conducted to determine what resources and activities middle school students would like to have available to use during their unstructured time. A phenomenological qualitative research design was used to gather data. The research method of inquiry included the use of semi-structured interviews of middle school students from a West Michigan middle school. The results from this study were used to assist the school's staff to identify how enrolled students want to spend unstructured time during the school day. The results may also be used for future programming and could help to incorporate activities that students would like to have available.

### **Significance of Problem**

The significance of the problem was that a lack of activity could decrease students' overall wellbeing and health. Structured physical and leisure activities provide opportunities to acquire and practice social, physical, and intellectual skills that may promote student development while at school. This study relates to occupational therapy because occupational

therapists work in schools, are well-versed in adolescent' development, and understand the importance of play during unstructured time.

### **Research Questions**

1. What physical activities do middle school students at a West Michigan middle school want to have available during their unstructured time in school?
2. What leisure activities do middle school students at a West Michigan middle school want to have available during their unstructured time in school?
3. What available resources does a West Michigan middle school have that support physical and leisure activity participation during students' unstructured time during the school day?

### **Key Concepts**

#### **Leisure activity.**

Leisure activity is defined as an activity that people are not obligated to participate in but engage in for enjoyment (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2008). For the purpose of this study, the researchers defined leisure activities as non-physical activities. This included activities such as card games, board games, writing poetry, journaling, listening to music, or coloring.

#### **Physical activity.**

Physical activity is defined as engaging the body in movement that works the muscles and uses more energy than when the body is at rest ("World Health Organization," 2011). The students were observed they participated in activities that required movement which allowed the researchers to gather information about physical activities in which students were involved.

Some forms of physical activity observed included playing basketball, football, and running around outside.

### **Middle school student.**

A middle school student is defined as an adolescent between the ages of 9 and 14 (“Cambridge Dictionaries,” 2011). The grades that are present in middle schools vary from state to state. For the purpose of this study middle school students were defined as students in sixth to eighth grade.

### **Unstructured time.**

Unstructured time is defined as the time of day when students choose which activities to participate in for ease and relaxation (“Dictionary,” 2011a). This time was explained to students as the time of day, during the school day, when they have the opportunity to engage in activities that they choose. For the purpose of this study, the researchers focused on the students’ lunch period as the primary unstructured time during the school day.

### **Summary**

Previous research showed that middle school students did not participate in the recommended amount of activity time, in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The purpose of this study was to identify physical and leisure activities that middle school students would want to have available during their unstructured time at school. Further, the results of this study helped students understand their behaviors and what motivating factors contribute to how they act during structured and unstructured parts of their school day. To conduct this study, the researchers needed to understand the meanings of physical and leisure activity, middle school students, and unstructured time. The goal of this study was to determine what activities middle



school students would participate in during their unstructured time at school to increase their activity.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The literature review focused on activities that middle school students wanted to participate in during their unstructured time at school. The literature provided information about three themes: middle school students, middle school environment, and leisure activities. The databases used to gather articles were accessed through Grand Valley State University's library website and include: CINAHL, ERIC, and PROQUEST. The chapter explains the role of the occupational therapist as related to this study, the person-environment-occupation (PEO) theory, and then discusses each segment of the PEO theory as related to the literature that provides background information for this study.

### **Role of Occupational Therapy**

The occupational therapist's role is to work with people to help them regain or establish participation in activities that they deem meaningful and purposeful (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2008b). The American Occupational Therapy Association (2008b) states that occupational therapists are concerned with the occupations in which clients participate, as well as the factors that affect clients' abilities to participate and engage in activities that promote healthy living. In regard to this study, some students at the West Michigan middle school have a disability or an impairment that impacts their ability to participate in activities while other students needed guidance for creating healthy habits and routines. These are areas in which occupational therapists may be directly involved with the students.

Occupational therapists treat and provide intervention with clients in order to improve their clients' ability to participate in meaningful activities. Research has demonstrated a positive relationship between occupation, physical activity, and health. Welk (2002) stated that all humans should participate in physical activity because it positively impacts their health. There is

also a relationship between occupation and health, which states that occupation, is a basic human need and is crucial for health and well-being (Stanley, Boshoff, & Dollman, 2007). Throughout this research, the relationship between health and occupation was taken into consideration when interacting with the middle school students to understand their views on activities in which they would like to engage.

For this study, middle school students needed encouragement to engage in activities during their unstructured time at school. This encouragement came from occupational therapists as they provide motivation to encourage students to engage in meaningful activity. This motivation could include both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. Intrinsic motivation occurs when individuals participate in activities they find interesting and enjoyable (Kozub & Farmer, 2011). Extrinsic motivation occurs when participation is influenced by outside factors such as validation from friends, expectations parents have, or receiving trophies for winning. For example, occupational therapists can use the Model of Human Occupation theory to base their interventions to increase student motivation (Kozub & Farmer, 2011). Inquiring about what motivates middle school students helps determine their habits and the reasons why they want certain activities to be available.

School occupational therapists work with students that have physical, behavioral, and cognitive delays or are diagnosed with congenital disabilities. Also, occupational therapists partner with parents, community organizations, educational staff, and medical staff to help students increase participation. Occupational therapists in the school setting focus on helping students engage in meaningful and purposeful school occupations. These occupations include activities that make a student successful and engaged in school life such as academic, social, and extracurricular activities (Bazyk & Case-Smith, 2010).

Occupational therapists focus on motivating individuals as they participate in meaningful activities. Middle school students may participate in meaningful activities during their unstructured time at school. Due to the fact that occupational therapists are knowledgeable about adolescent development as well as how environment impacts activity, it is beneficial that the researchers are occupational therapy students. This line of research is within the domain of occupational practice because of the researchers' knowledge.

### **Person-Environment-Occupation Theory**

Law, Cooper, Strong, Stewart, Rigby, and Letts (1996) developed the Person-Environment-Occupation Theory (PEO) for occupational therapy practice. The purpose of this model of occupational therapy is to focus on the interaction between the person, environment, and occupation (Law et al., 1996). For this research study, the PEO theory was used because of its close connection with occupational therapy. The PEO theory was also used to organize the variables that contribute to the middle school students' perceptions of leisure activities while at school. In the following sections, each aspect of this theory, the person, environment, and occupation, is discussed with supporting research.

#### **Person (middle school students).**

According to the PEO theory, the characteristics of a person include one's values, interests, skills, abilities, and life experiences. A person's values and interests can be determined by the meaningful and purposeful activities in which the person participates. Cognitive, social, emotional, and sensorimotor skills impact a person's skills and abilities, while life experiences help define his or her life story (Brown, 2009). Middle school students' values, interests, skills, abilities, and life experiences are not only affected by the activities they are involved in but also by their development.

### ***Adolescent growth and development.***

When students reach adolescence, numerous changes occur both physically and psychologically. Those who interact with middle school students should be aware of these changes to understand the importance of being active in play, sports, games, physical education, and planned exercises (Spear, 2002). Physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral development all impact adolescents as they grow, each of these changes were further examined. For this study, a basic understanding of middle school students' development was beneficial when interacting with the students.

### ***Physical development.***

Puberty is the aspect of physical development that involves the most changes. Middle school students experience major body changes that include the development of breasts and first menstrual period for girls and deepened voices and broadened shoulders for boys. For girls, growth spurts typically begin between the ages of 10 and 12 and end between the ages of 17 and 19. However, growth spurts in boys typically begin around the same ages as girls (between 12 and 14 years old) but end around the age of 20 (Gentry & Campbell, 2002).

Research has found that early maturing boys and girls fall into an at-risk category during physical development. Girls who mature early may struggle with depression, substance abuse, disruptive behaviors, and eating disorders. Boys who mature early may experiment with high-risk behaviors such as sexual activity, smoking, or delinquency (Gentry & Campbell, 2002).

As stated, girls may struggle with eating disorders which may be because they are highly concerned with their physical appearance and body image. However, boys may also struggle with their appearance. Both genders are known to focus their time on their physical appearance in order to "fit in" with their peers while developing their own sense of style. Since physical

appearance is highly important to adolescents, parents should be receptive to communicate these concerns with their children (Gentry & Campbell, 2002).

While appearance is important at this age, it may be a surprising fact that the amount of physical activity in which individuals participates in decreases during adolescence. This may lead to health concerns such as being overweight. During adolescence, it is important that healthy routines, which may include a proper diet and engagement in physical activity, are learned. Participating in physical activity may have positive outcomes such as making friends, gaining confidence, learning about teamwork, and building character (Gentry & Campbell, 2002).

### *Cognitive development.*

The cognitive changes that occur during adolescence include an improved ability to reason effectively, problem solve, think abstractly, reflect, and plan for the future. As these changes occur, adolescents' confidence levels vary. Studies have shown that the confidence levels in cognitive skills and abilities differ between adolescent boys and girls. Girls tend to be more confident in reading and social skills while boys tend to be more confident in athletic and math skills. While adolescents may become more confident as they age, they still value adults' guidance to make decisions (Gentry & Campbell, 2002).

Students' cognitive abilities vary which is why no two students excel or struggle with the same subjects. They may have challenges with reading, verbal communication, writing, math, or reasoning. These struggles may be associated with behavioral issues, when the underlying factor may be a cognitive deficit. If these cognitive issues are overlooked, students at the middle and high school level are at a higher risk of school failure (Gentry & Campbell, 2002). The

occupational therapy profession strives to support all students with their successes and struggles to help prevent students from failing.

### ***Emotional development.***

Self-identity is a primary aspect of emotional development. Adolescents are discovering who they are and what makes them unique. Identity includes self-concept, which is one's set of beliefs about his or her self, and self-esteem which is how one feels about his or her beliefs. Low self-esteem may occur in adolescents "if there is a gap between one's self-concept and what one believes one should be like" (Gentry & Campbell, 2002, p. 16). Characteristics of low self-esteem in adolescents may include lack of energy, excessive shyness, disliking one's appearance, rejecting compliments, and conforming to others' desires. Professionals, such as occupational therapists, should be aware of these characteristics and know how to address them with adolescents (Gentry & Campbell, 2002).

As adolescents develop emotionally, they must learn skills to cope with stress and how to make and maintain healthy relationships. Other aspects of life that adolescents must learn throughout their emotional development include recognizing and managing emotions, developing empathy for others, learning to resolve conflict appropriately, and learning to work cooperatively with others (Gentry & Campbell, 2002). The ability to understand one's emotions will aid in participation in social contexts.

### ***Social development.***

Adolescents experience social situations with numerous people including peers, family members, and within school and the community. However, adolescents desire more independence so they spend more time with their peers rather than their family, but both peers and families influence an adolescent's social development. A positive family dynamic has the

ability to influence emotional development and school performance as well as possibly decreasing adolescents' engagement in high-risk activities. Peer groups may influence an individual's social status such as popularity and acceptance. Acceptance by peer groups aids with adjustment in adolescence as well as adulthood (Gentry & Campbell, 2002).

As peer groups and families influence the social development of adolescents, the characteristics within their communities also have the potential to affect their development. Major contributors include the community's socioeconomic status (SES), types of resources available, service systems (including schools), religious organizations, the media, and residents of the community. The SES of a community has the potential to impact an adolescent's academic achievement, engagement in behaviors that are criminal or delinquent, or the decision to drop out of school (Gentry & Campbell, 2002). Other factors may also influence an adolescent's development and social interactions within his or her community.

The media, which includes television, music, and the Internet, may have an impact on adolescents' involvement with peers. Adolescents are exposed to media for approximately six to eight hours a day and it can have a positive or negative impact on adolescent development (Gentry & Campbell, 2002). For example, numerous television shows include violence and unhealthy sexual content. The Internet is a widely used form of communication for adolescents to interact with one other. This includes chat rooms, instant messaging, and e-mail. Professionals who work or interact with teens should be aware of how the use of media has a strong influence on adolescents so that any issues that arise may be addressed (Gentry & Campbell, 2002).



***Behavioral development.***

Each aspect of adolescents' development, physical, cognitive, emotional, and social, may affect the behaviors they display during this period of transition. Risk taking is one behavior in which adolescents engage. Gentry and Campbell (2002) state "Risk taking in adolescence is an important way that adolescents shape their identities, try out their new decision-making skills, and develop realistic assessments of themselves, other people, and the world" (p. 29).

Adolescents participate in risk taking behaviors because they take place with other peers and involve an exhilarating feeling. Teens need opportunities to experiment and to experience the results of their own decision-making, in various situations. However, these choices could pose a potential threat to the physical and mental well-being of adolescents, which makes parental involvement essential during this time of development (Gentry & Campbell, 2002).

For this study, a basic understanding of adolescent growth and development was essential. This included knowledge about the physical, social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive changes. The researchers knew how these aspects may affect adolescents' abilities to choose what activities to engage in during their unstructured time at school. Not only does the person decide what activities he or she engages in but the access and barriers to the environment also impacts his or her decision to participate in different activities.

**Environment (middle school environment).**

Law et al. (1996) define the environmental aspect of the PEO theory as a combination of cultural, socioeconomic, institutional, physical, and social determinants. The cultural and socioeconomic status of the community, where the West Michigan middle school is located, affects the school environment and the resources that are available. For this study, the environment included the middle school building, the outdoor space, the equipment available for

the students to use, and the social relationships between the students. The following research provided background information for this study.

A study conducted by Nichol, Pickett, and Janssen (2009), examined the relationship between school environments and physical activity. The authors compiled data from the 2005/2006 Canadian Health Behavior in School-Aged Children's Survey (HBSC) and used multilevel logistic regression to analyze the data collected. The data used was from 7,638 students in sixth to tenth grade from 164 schools. The HBSC included information about demographics, student health behaviors, and outcomes (Nichol, Pickett, & Janssen, 2009). For this study the researchers focused only on the questions that pertained to physical activity at school.

Students' responses on the HBSC related to their engagement in physical activity both in the classroom and during free time. An example of a question from the HBSC was "About how many hours a week do you usually take part in physical activity that makes you out of breath or warmer than usual in your [class time/free time (eg, lunch)] at school" (Nichol, Pickett, & Janssen, 2009, p. 248)? Not only were students answers recorded, but the principal or vice principal was asked to complete an Administrator Survey about the school's policies on physical activity during the school day. The Administrator Survey also asked about the resources that were available to students, such as outdoor playing fields, gymnasiums, programs and activities, as well as the conditions of these facilities (Nichol, Pickett, & Janssen, 2009). In relation to this study, the administrators of the West Michigan middle school were asked questions regarding what resources are available to students and the school environment.

According to the Administrator and the HBSC surveys, the researchers found that 49.3% of students reported being active for at least two hours per week during free time at school. For

boys, their physical activity increased if there was an outdoor field available, whereas girls' physical activity only increased if the field was in good condition. Regarding the gymnasium condition, if it was in good or poor condition, boys were 25% more likely to be physically active. However, girls' physical activity was not impacted by the condition of the gym. Overall, the study found that the recreational environment was the most important factor to promote physical activity compared to school policy, facility, or recreational opportunity (Nichol, Pickett, & Janssen, 2009).

The authors did not report limitations in this study. However, by analyzing this article limitations were found. These included limited background information, no previous literature reviewed, and did not describe participation well. The background information did not include an explanation of the importance of this study nor did it state why the researchers were interested in conducting the study. There was also no mention of previous studies that researched a similar question of interest which would provide some comparison. The results did not clearly state the age of the students that participated in this study which may affect the ability to generalize the findings.

Another study, conducted by Sallis, Conway, Prochaska, McKenzie, Marshall, and Brown (2001), focused on the relationship between the school environment and the physical activity of youth. The researchers used 24 public middle schools in San Diego, California and observed physical activity areas at the schools. Trained assessors used the System for Observing Play and Leisure Activity in Youth (SOPLAY) to observe students on three randomly assigned days. The assessors observed the students before school, during lunch, and after school, and coded the students' level of physical activity as 'sedentary', 'walking', or 'very active'. The assessors also noted the temperature, accessibility of the area, presence of supervision, if there

were organized activities, and what equipment was available (Sallis, Conway, Prochaska, McKenzie, Marshall, & Brown, 2001).

The study found that the mean percentage of girls who were observed as being physically active was 1.6% and the mean percentage of boys was 5.5%. Girls were more active indoors if there was no equipment available and more active outdoors if equipment was available. Whereas, boys were most active on courts if there was high supervision and equipment available. Both boys and girls were more active when improvements were made to the school environment, which included the addition of basketball hoops, baseball diamonds, and soccer and football field. The main finding of this study was the low percentage of physical activity during unstructured time: 2% for girls, 6% for boys (Sallis, Conway, Prochaska, McKenzie, Marshall & Brown, 2001).

These researchers reported strengths of this study, but limitations were not. The strengths included numerous random observation days, objective measurements of all variables, and a 90% interobserver reliability (Sallis, Conway, Prochaska, McKenzie, Marshall, & Brown, 2001). Through analyzing this article, limitations were found. They included a lack of background information, lack of literature from previous studies, the number of participants was not stated, and the schools used in the study were from a small geographic area. The background information included an objective for this study, but more in-depth information would have been beneficial for the readers. Also, there was only one mention of a past study that researched a similar question of interest. The number of participants was not stated but the mean enrollment of students at each school was included in the study. This may affect the overall results and the statistics that were presented. Lastly, the limited geographic location of data collection may have resulted in data that was not generalizable.

A study done by Brink, Nigg, Lampe, Kingston, Mootz, and Van Vliet (2010) examined the design of outdoor spaces at schools that affected the students' level of physical activity. The study included nine schools that were located in low-income neighborhoods with an average family income of \$21,000. These nine schools were divided into three groups labeled A, B, and C. Within each group (A, B, and C), there was one established, one recently built, and one control school. The outdoor space was renovated at the established schools at least two years prior to the study and at the recently built schools within a year. The outdoor space at the control schools were on average 50 years old with minimal renovations over the years. The study included collecting data before and after construction took place at the established schools, and the data were then compared to the recently built and control schools (Brink et al., 2010).

The observers used the System for Observing Play and Leisure Activity in Youth (SOPLAY) on four separate school days to gather data about different aspects of the outdoor space that impacted the students' physical activity the most. The pre-construction data were then compared to the data that were collected about the control group. Finally, the post-construction data were compared to the data that were collected about the recently built schools. These data were analyzed to determine what changes should be made to the schools' outdoor spaces to promote physical activity among the students (Brink et al., 2010).

Results indicated that the number of students using the outdoor space was higher at established and recently built schools than at the control schools. At the established and recently built schools, boys were more active, whereas girls were more active at the control schools. The study also determined that soft surfaces affected the amount of physical activity observed at the schools. The results stated that more student activity occurred at the established and recently built schools where soft surfaces were available (Brink et al., 2010). These outcomes may be

generalized to this research study because the researchers examined the outdoor space available to students at the West Michigan middle school and how it impacted the students' level of activity.

A major limitation of the study conducted by Brink et al. (2010) was the use of the SOPLAY without additional measures of observation. The SOPLAY only allows for the volume of activity to be measured, and disregards other variables, such as individual movements. The researchers may have benefitted from observing individual movements so that they could have gained a better understanding of the impact the environment has on children's activity levels.

For this study, the researchers took the school environment into consideration and how it affected the students' occupational performance and engagement. The environment can either enhance or inhibit student performance during their unstructured time at school. Specifically, this West Michigan middle school currently has limited resources and the researchers wanted to determine what the students would like to be available during their unstructured time.

### **Occupation.**

A person's occupations are the meaningful activities that he or she participates in on a daily basis, as defined by the PEO theory (Cole & Tufano, 2008). Law et al. (1996) state "Occupations are considered to meet the person's intrinsic needs for self-maintenance, expression, and fulfillment within the context of his or her personal roles and environment" (p. 17). This research study was focused on determining what activities middle school students wanted to be available during their unstructured time at school.

A study conducted by Harrell, Pearce, Markland, Wilson, Bradley, and McMurray (2003) provided information about the differences between leisure activities for boys and girls by determining the activities in which they had a desire to participate. Previous research focused on

the activity of watching television whereas few studies have examined specific activities adolescents wanted to participate in during their leisure time (Harrell et al., 2003).

Harrell and colleagues' study included 1,211 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students from five schools in North Carolina. The Physical Activity Checklist which is based on the Minnesota Leisure Time Activity Questionnaire was used to identify three activities the students participated in most. After consent was obtained from parents, the questionnaires were administered to the students during a regular school day. The data were then analyzed using one-way ANOVA (Harrell et al., 2003).

The results yielded 84 different leisure time activities that students reported as important to them. The top five activities boys reported participating in the most included football, basketball, bicycling, running, and baseball. Girls reported their top five activities as talking, running, walking, bicycling, and dancing. The results also showed that sixth and seventh grade students reported more active activities compared to eighth grade students, and that boys were more active than girls (Harrell et al., 2003).

Data collection was a major limitation of this study. Self-report was used, which may lead to biased answers (Taylor & Kielhofner, 2006). The bias answers may occur because students may not remember their daily activities or they may have reported favorite leisure activities instead of actual activities in which they participated. The strengths of this study included a large sample size, the inclusion of minority populations, an unbiased sample, and the questions avoided gender bias, and the activities were not grouped, instead they were alphabetized (Harrell et al., 2003).

This study benefited from this research article's strengths and method of data collection. The researchers strived to have similar strengths such as a large sample size and not grouping

activities. The Minnesota Leisure Time Activity Questionnaire is a valid measure and the instrument used for this study included similar questions to make it a reliable measurement (Harrell et al., 2003).

Pate, Sallis, Ward, Stevens, Dowda, Welk, Young, Jobe, and Strikmiller (2010) conducted a study that asked girls in sixth and eighth grade about physical activities in which they would like to participate. There were 1,636 sixth grade girls and 3,398 eighth grade girls who participated in this study from 36 schools in the United States. The participants self-reported their physical activity by recording it in a daily grid, split into 30-minute time blocks. Then they were given a list of 71 activities grouped by categories and they were to record “with whom” and “where” the activity occurred. There were five options for “where” the activity occurred and four choices for “with whom” the activity took place. Mixed-model ANOVAs were used along with logistic analyses to determine differences between the grades (Pate et al., 2010).

The results stated that the top ten activities for sixth grade students were travel by walking, doing household chores, basketball, dance, playing with younger children, walking for exercise, running/jogging, bicycling, playground games, and gymnastics/tumbling. For eighth grade students, travel by walking, doing household chores, dance, basketball, walking for exercise, running/jogging, playing with younger children, softball/baseball, volleyball, and track and field, were reported as the top ten activities (Pate et al., 2010). Some of these activities were reported by the West Michigan middle school students in this study as these activities are typical for this age group.

The large and diverse sample of girls was a strength of this study. The limitations include the convenience sample, no seventh grade students were used, and a self-report method



of data collection. Using a convenience sample limits the generalizability of the results because the activities girls in sixth and eighth grade report may not be the same as all girls in the United States. Since seventh grade students were not included in this study, the results may have been impacted by their absence. Lastly, the self-report method may have skewed the results of the study and is a subjective method of data collection (Pate et al., 2010). For this study, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade boys and girls were included to increase the generalizability of the results.

A study conducted by Nippold, Duthie, and Larsen (2005), investigated literacy as an important part of adolescents' language development. This study used reading as a leisure activity and compared it to other free-time activities in which students would choose to participate. Literature was reviewed to determine aspects of literacy such as unfamiliar words, time spent reading, and differences in spoken word recognition compared to print word recognition. In addition, literature on the socialization patterns of girls and boys between the ages of ten and fifteen was discussed. Reviewing literacy and socialization patterns were used to determine if solitary activities were being replaced by socialization activities (Nippold, Duthie, & Larsen, 2005).

The study included 100 sixth grade students and 100 ninth grade students, with 50 girls and 50 boys in each age group. The participants were recruited by their teachers who volunteered their students for participation in the study, and then a passive consent procedure was used. Parents were notified of the study and all students were informed that participation was voluntary. The students signed an assent form the day of the testing (Nippold, Duthie, & Larsen, 2005).

The study took place in each classroom using a large group format. The students completed the “Student Questionnaire” as they listened to each question that was read out loud and then responded to each question in the time allotted. The questionnaire included three main questions and took about ten minutes to complete. The questions inquired about how students spent their leisure time, how much time the students spent each day reading for pleasure, and asked the students to indicate the type of literature they enjoyed reading (Nippold, Duthie, & Larsen, 2005).

The results stated both the activities students reported as participating in most and least often. The activities participated in “most often” included listening to music or going to concerts, watching television or movies, playing sports, and playing computer or video games. The activities participated in “least often” included cooking, running or walking, writing, and arts and crafts. Reading was the activity the researchers were examining, it was reported as a moderately popular activity. The data compared boys’ answers to girls’ answers and found that there were differences. Boys answered playing video games and sports most often while girls reported talking on the phone, using e-mail, shopping, writing, and cooking. The data collected were analyzed using ANOVA with Bonferroni corrections (Nippold, Duthie, & Larsen, 2005).

One limitation of this study was that only students from public schools in Oregon that were located in lower middle-income neighborhoods were included. Using a small population limited the ability of the researchers to generalize the study’s findings. Another limitation was only examining the time spent leisurely reading instead of reading for schoolwork or other types of reading as well (Nippold, Duthie, & Larsen, 2005). For this study, some participants reported a desire to read during their unstructured time while others chose activities that involved more physical movement.

McKenzie, Crespo, Baquero, and Elder (2010) determined what physical activity options children voluntarily participate in before school, at recess, and at lunch. The background literature included studies that solely researched the amount of physical activity during physical education at school, but it was found that very few schools offer physical education daily. Another study found that leisure time at school not only was important for physical activity, but also for socialization and as a break from academic activities (McKenzie, Crespo, Baquero, & Elder, 2010).

For this study, 13 Title I elementary schools in California participated. Each school had approximately 667 students and was located in a low-income neighborhood. The data were collected during 65 school days in an 18-month period and were recorded on a handheld mechanical recording device. Differences between genders were also noted. The observations occurred during leisure times before school, at recess, and at lunch. While observing the students during their leisure time, the System for Observing Play and Leisure Activity in Youth (SOPLAY) was used to record the number of students and those students' level of physical activity. Students' activity levels were recorded as sedentary, walking, or vigorous. Not only was the level of physical activity recorded but the amount of supervision was recorded as well (McKenzie, Crespo, Baquero, & Elder, 2010).

The study collected 1,223 scans of students, and each type of physical activity (sedentary, walking, and vigorous) was analyzed separately. A logistic regression analysis was used to analyze the type of physical activity with the various codes at the time of observation to determine the results. Results indicated that students were more physically active during their lunch and recess periods compared to before school. The results also found that that areas of organized activities and supervised spaces were used less by the students. Students would

engage in more physical activity if loose equipment was available to them as well as in areas that were not directly supervised, when compared to areas where no equipment was available (McKenzie, Crespo, Baquero, & Elder, 2010).

The limitations of this study included only one geographic location, how participation was suggested, and population makeup. The geographic location and Latino population limits the generalizability of the results. Due to the principal requesting the participation of schools, the sample was not randomized; therefore response bias may be a concern (McKenzie, Crespo, Baquero, & Elder, 2010). This study strove to have a diverse population even though the West Michigan middle school has a large Latino and African American student population.

The PEO theory defines occupations as tasks in which individuals choose in which to participate. In this study, the middle school students were asked to report the activities in which they would like to participate. If the activities students wanted to participate in were available, then the activity becomes more meaningful and purposeful.

### **Summary and Implications for the Study**

After completing the literature review, the researchers of this study discovered specific focus areas regarding what activities middle school students would like to participate in during their unstructured time at school. The three focus areas researched for the purpose of this study were the person, environment, and occupation. According to the PEO theory the person, environment, and occupation interact and influence one another.

The students' age and stage of development influenced the occupations that they wanted to participate in, which were also affected by the school environment. The participants from the West Michigan middle school were between the ages of 11 and 14. Adolescents at the age of 11 are at the beginning of Jean Piaget's formal operational stage of development (Wood, Smith, &

Grossniklaus, 2001). According to this theory of development, adolescents are able to be active participants in the research process. During the formal operational stage adolescents are able to think about multiple variables in logical ways, formulate hypotheses, and think about abstract relationships and concepts (Wood, Smith, & Grossniklaus, 2001). Adolescents have a higher ability for complex thought and are better able to express their feelings verbally (Gentry & Campbell, 2002). This was important for this study because the students verbally self-reported the activities in which they wanted to engage.

The school environment also influences the occupations in which middle school students choose to participate. For this study, the researchers collected data in the students' natural environment (the West Michigan middle school). The school environment and the available resources may have influenced the students' responses on the activities in which they wanted to participate.

Similar, the school environment and the students' level of development impacted the occupations chosen by the students. Overall, the researchers discovered three themes from the literature that helped frame the research: adolescent growth and development, the effect of the school environment on adolescent development, and their desired occupations. The information provided in this literature review aided in the construction of this study's methodology.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The methodology focused on the study's design, site and population, equipment and instructions, validity and reliability, and the procedure. The methodology assisted the researchers to determine the students' perceptions of unstructured time at a West Michigan middle school. This chapter explains the process of data collection.

#### **Study Design**

The researchers employed a qualitative approach to determine the students' perceptions of leisure time during their unstructured time at school. A phenomenological qualitative approach was used for this study as this type of approach investigates an experience and how the person interprets that experience (Luborsky & Lysack, 2006). This study examined the students' use of time during their lunch period and how they perceive their lunch time experiences. A phenomenological approach allowed the participants to explain their experiences during their lunch period and was therefore, the most appropriate design for the particular research questions that this study investigated.

A qualitative approach was more appropriate for this particular study compared to a quantitative approach because information cannot be obtained about students' perceptions of their unstructured time accurately with quantitative methods. Qualitative techniques are used to study human behavior and behavior changes, which was applicable to this study. A qualitative approach allowed participants' words and actions to be well described in the results whereas quantitative research would have limited participants' response options. The results from qualitative research provided a complete description of the participants' experiences rather than testing a research-constructed hypothesis (Stevens, 2012).

## **Study Site and Population**

Administrators at a West Michigan middle school requested research to be conducted to provide information regarding more appropriate activities for students. Students who were in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, participated in this study as a convenience sample. A convenience sample is a type of non-probability sampling which involves being drawn from a part of the population that is readily available (Dickerson, 2006). In order for students to participate, an informed consent form was sent home to their parents for review and a signature. The informed consent form can be found in Appendix A. On the day of data collection, participants were asked to sign an assent form which stated the rights they had as a participant. The assent form can be found in Appendix B.

Participants ranged from 11 to 15 years old. This age range was used as this is the age of students who attend the West Michigan middle school. Students at the age of 11 are at the beginning of Jean Piaget's formal operational stage of development (Wood, Smith, & Grossniklaus, 2001). According to this theory of development, adolescents are able to be active participants in the research process. Students between the ages of 11 and 15 have a higher ability for complex thought and are better able to express their feelings verbally (Gentry & Campbell, 2002). This was important for this study because the students verbally self-reported the activities in which they wanted to engage.

In order to have participated in this research, the participants had to meet the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria included students who had the cognitive abilities and verbal skills to assent to the research study and were enrolled in general education classrooms. Students who did not meet this criterion were excluded from this study.

## **Equipment and Instruments**

There were no existing standardized tools that addressed students' perceptions about unstructured time. Thus, in order to examine the students' perceptions, the researchers developed 13 interview questions that were used during data collection. The questions were developed based on the literature and the research questions, which focused on how students wanted to spend their unstructured time during their lunch period.

The 13 interview questions had never been used; therefore they lacked validity and reliability. The researchers focused on inter-rater reliability through interviewer training, use of proper demeanor, and interpersonal skills to improve the reliability and validity (Peacock & Paul-Ward, 2006). Also, to increase the reliability of the interview questions, a pilot study was conducted with seven middle school aged students. Piloting the questionnaire aided the researchers in determining the respondents' understandability of the questions (Forsyth & Kviz, 2006). The Students' Leisure Time Questionnaire was used in this study. It can be accessed in Appendix C.

## **Trustworthiness**

This study was a qualitative design that investigated what activities middle school students would like to have available during their unstructured time at school. In order to accurately collect data, the process needed to be trustworthy. To improve the trustworthiness of this study, triangulation, member checking, interview training, and reflexivity were utilized.

In order to evaluate interview questions, the researchers examined the reliability and validity. To determine the reliability and validity, the interview questions were used in a pilot study. The reliability referred to the likelihood that the interview questions could be administered by two different researchers producing the same results, while validity referred to



whether or not the Students' Leisure Time Questionnaire measured what it intended (Kielhofner & Fossey, 2006).

To improve the trustworthiness of this study the researchers used triangulation, which was the "use of two or more strategies to collect and or interpret or analyze information" (Lysack, Luborsky, & Dillaway, 2006, p. 353). During data collection for this study, more than one researcher collected data; one asked the questions and the other two recorded the participants' responses. Researcher triangulation was also used to increase the trustworthiness of this study. Triangulation occurred when more than one researcher was involved in the data analysis in an attempt to account for single-researcher bias (Curtin & Fossey, 2007).

The researchers also used member checking to increase the level of trustworthiness for this study (Krefting, 1991). Following the interview the participants were shown the notes taken by the researchers. The participants were then able to verify that his or her ideas were accurately interpreted by the researchers.

To further ensure trustworthiness, the researchers received interview training by a qualitative expert. The interview training addressed proper tone of voice, awareness of body language, and how to avoid leading gestures or statements. The researchers also practiced the research questions to ensure that they were consistent with the presentation of the questions.

Reflexivity was also used to ensure trustworthiness. This involved the researchers acknowledging that they were active participants during the research process. The researchers had significant influences on the research process as well as the participants' engagement during the interviews. The researchers had to acknowledge their own biases, assumptions, and values so that their personal beliefs were not reflected in the research process. By acknowledging personal beliefs, the researchers attempted to guarantee that the results reflected the participants'

views rather than those of the researchers. Overall, the researchers had to be honest about the reflexive process to validate their learning or change in thinking that occurred throughout the research process (Curtin & Fossey, 2007).

### **Procedure**

On April 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012, the three researchers were at the West Michigan middle school to conduct interviews with sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Informed consent forms were sent home with students on Wednesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012. This form was given to teachers who passed it out to the students in his or her class. Students who had the informed consent form signed by their parents and returned to school between April 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 were included in this study. The researchers conducted 23 interviews between these two days, with each interview lasting between 5 and 10 minutes.

Before the interviews, the researchers set up a table and four chairs, one for the student and three for the interviewers. The interviewing researcher was seated directly across from the participant. The other two researchers were seated to the side of the table. The interviews were conducted in an office during the students' fourth period. After the area was set up, the participants were brought to the designated office by a school official from the middle school. The researchers introduced themselves and asked the students to sign an assent form. Once the assent form was signed, the interviews began.

During the interviews the three researchers took turns asking the 13 interview questions. The two researchers who were not asking the questions were responsible for documenting the participants' responses. The researchers used interpersonal skills during the interview process to make the participants comfortable. The researcher asked the participants the 13 interview questions in order and they were allowed to return to a question if necessary. After the 13

questions had been asked, the participants had the opportunity to ask the researchers questions about the study.

Once all of the participants' questions were answered they were shown the researchers' notes from the interview. The participants were asked to check the notes to ascertain that the researcher had accurately recorded his or her viewpoint. The participants were thanked for their time and were given a folder from the Grand Valley State University bookstore. The participants were then excused and the next student was brought to the office by a school official. This process continued until all participants had been interviewed.

### **Data Analysis**

After the researchers conducted interviews with participants, they made a copy of their field notes to be used through the analysis process. The original copy was filed in a reference file. Each researcher read through her field notes independently. While reading through their notes, the researchers made conceptual labels and analytic memos. Conceptual labels were short phrases or words that categorized the information retrieved from participants' responses (Peacock & Paul-Ward, 2006). Analytic memos were reflective notes that aided the researchers in organizing their thoughts (Peacock & Paul-Ward, 2006).

After the researchers read through and made comments in their field notes, they consolidated their own conceptual labels and created index codes. This was done through open coding which was used to determine themes and similar concepts of the data. Once open coding occurred, thematic analysis was used to specify further themes and key quotations from participants' responses. Finally, each researcher had a comprehensive list of index labels which functioned as a table of contents to the data (Peacock & Paul-Ward, 2006).

The next step for the researchers was to compare their notes and index labels which each other to look for similarities and differences. This occurred through axial coding which reexamined the themes in open coding. This step was used to determine the main themes and subthemes that were established by the researchers during their individual reviews of the data. The last step was selective coding which focused on the specific research questions (Peacock & Paul-Ward, 2006).

### **Summary**

The researchers conducted a phenomenological qualitative study focusing on the students' perceptions about their unstructured time during their lunch period. The research was conducted on April 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at a West Michigan middle school. Twenty-three interviews were conducted between these two days. A number of techniques were employed by the researchers to increase the trustworthiness of this study.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis**

### **Techniques of Data Analysis**

#### **Qualitative Analysis.**

After completion of the interviews with the middle school students, the researchers analyzed the results. First, the three researchers independently read, analyzed, and chose main themes from the qualitative responses, which is termed open coding. This process was used to identify and “chunk” themes with like concepts. Then the researchers collaborated to align their themes, using axial coding, and creating four overall themes: sports, outdoor activities, indoor activities, and equipment (Peacock & Paul-Ward, 2006). Subthemes were also identified under each theme. The subthemes for sports were structured and unstructured; outdoor activities which included individual and group; indoor activities which included games and non-games; and equipment which included sports, non-sports, and other. The researchers then consulted with a qualitative expert, Cynthia Grapczynski, Ed.D., M.S., OTR, to verify the themes and subthemes.

## Characteristics of Subjects

Table 1 – Subject Characteristics

	Number of Students	Percentage
Male	10	43%
Female	13	57%
6th Grade	13	57%
7th Grade	3	13%
8th Grade	7	30%
11 years old	4	17%
12 years old	6	26%
13 years old	8	35%
14 years old	4	17%
15 years old	1	0.04%

## Themes

### Sports.

For the purpose of this study, sports are defined as an activity that requires specific skills and physical abilities (“Dictionary”, 2011b). Within this theme, the subthemes included structured and unstructured sports. Structured sports are defined as organized activities involving rules (“Dictionary”, 2011c). Unstructured sports are activities that lack organization and involve choice (“Dictionary”, 2011a). Examples of structured sports were basketball, volleyball, football, baseball, and soccer while playing catch and running were examples of unstructured sports. When asked what students would like to do during lunch time one student

stated, “I would like to do something fun, like play basketball” and another student stated, “play sports, baseball or basketball.”

When examining the results, two students reported a desire to participate in unstructured sports while fourteen students reported wanting to participate in structured sports during their lunch period. Of the two students wanting to participate in unstructured sports, both were female. Within those who reported wanting to participate in structured sports, six were male and eight were female.

### **Outdoor Activities.**

Students were asked about activities which take place outside. The subthemes that emerged included individual and group activities. Students participate in individual activities alone whereas group activities involve more than one student. Out of the 23 students, 14 of them stated they would prefer to engage in outdoor activities. Examples of individual outdoor activities were hula hoop and hopscotch while group outdoor activities included foursquare, jump rope, tetherball, dodge ball, and corn hole. When students were asked about what they would want to do if they could do anything during lunch, a student stated, “I would like to play a competitive game outside.”

### **Indoor Activities.**

Within the theme of indoor activities there were two subthemes, which included games and non-games. Games are competitive activities that involve rules, skills, or chance, and are played by two or more people (“Dictionary”, 2011d). Non-games are activities that do not involve chance, skills, or rules. Nine students stated that they would like to participate in indoor activities during their lunch period. Board games, card games, and video games were included in the games subtheme while examples of non-games were talking with friends, listening to music,

reading/writing poetry, coloring, journaling, and dancing. When students were asked about the last time they had a “good” time at lunch, a student stated, “When we played Left, Center, Right. It’s a board game.” Another student stated, “When we played card games, like UNO.”

### **Equipment.**

The equipment subthemes were sports, non-sports, and other. Examples of equipment for sports included basketballs, foursquare balls, footballs, tetherball, volleyballs, and dodge balls. Jump ropes, hula hoops, bean bags, and swings were examples of equipment for non-sports. Lastly, equipment examples for other activities were “stuff for cross country”, shorts, Hot Wheels car, nonviolent toys, and basketball jerseys. When asked about what the students would tell their principal to buy for them to use during lunch, one student stated, “more jump ropes and basketballs” and another student said, “basketball or tetherball.”

### **Other Findings of Interest**

#### **Preference.**

Students were asked about their preference in engaging in six different activities: board games, listening to music, journaling, card games, coloring, and reading/writing poetry.

Table 2 – Leisure Activity Preference

Activity	Yes	No
Board games	14 students (61%)	9 students (39%)
Listening to music	22 students (97%)	1 student (3%)
Journaling	10 students (43%)	13 students (57%)
Card games	15 students (65%)	8 students (35%)
Coloring	11 students (48%)	12 students (52%)
Reading/writing poetry	13 students (57%)	10 students (43%)



### Activity Rating.

Students were also asked how they would rate eight different activities on a scale of zero to two. Table 3 shows a representation of the students' responses.

Table 3 – Activity Ratings

Activity	0 = would not like to do this activity at all	1 = would sort of like to do this activity	2 = would really like to do the activity
Basketball	5	5	13
Volleyball	7	5	11
Jump Rope	8	8	7
Football	7	3	13
Dancing	11	6	6
Running	3	8	12
Corn Hole	4	13	6
Four Square	2	7	14

### Summary

Twenty-three middle school students at a West Michigan middle school were interviewed by the researchers of this study. The data collected was coded into four themes with subthemes, examples, and direct quotes under each theme. From the themes, the researchers determined what activities the students currently participated in and what activities in which they would like to participate. The top three physical activities that students would like to participate in included four square, basketball, and football. The least popular physical activities were jump rope, dancing, and corn hole. The top three leisure activities included listening to music, card games,

and board games. The least popular leisure activities were reading/writing poetry, coloring, and journaling. The researchers were also able to identify equipment that the students would like to be available for their use during their unstructured time at school.

The data was given to school officials at the West Michigan middle school. It was then used to determine what equipment and games should be purchased for the students to use during their lunch period. This will help the school provide desired activities to the students which will promote student engagement in activities during unstructured time at school.

## **Chapter Five: Discussions and Conclusions**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research study was to assist a West Michigan middle school's staff to identify how enrolled students want to spend their unstructured time during the school day. The results will be beneficial for future programming as well as incorporating activities that students would like to have available throughout their unstructured time. The research answered the following research questions:

1. What physical activities do middle school students at a West Michigan middle school want to have available during their unstructured time in school?
2. What leisure activities do middle school students at a West Michigan middle school want to have available during their unstructured time in school?
3. What available resources does a West Michigan middle school have that support physical and leisure activity participation during students' unstructured time during the school day?

Following the student interviews, the researchers were able to identify the students' perceptions about their unstructured time and activities that would promote occupational engagement.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The West Michigan middle school where this research was conducted is located in an urban setting with an overall low socioeconomic status. S. Owens reported that there are about 750 students at the school with about 250 in each of the three lunch periods (personal communication, November 8, 2012). The students' current schedule allows them 30 minutes for lunch which includes time to eat as well as time to engage in activity (S. Owens, personal communication, November 8, 2012). The indoor area that is available for students' use, the

cafeteria, is limited as there are numerous tables in a small space. The outdoor area includes a small grassy area with a picnic bench and a large open paved area with two basketball hoops.

The students reported both physical activities and leisure activities that can occur within inside or outside environments. The available resources at the West Michigan middle school are limited to a basketball and a football, which may have elicited the responses the researchers obtained. Some of these responses included football, basketball, and listening to music. Below, the findings are discussed and divided into three themes: physical activities, leisure activities, and available resources.

### **Physical activities.**

The first research question was what physical activities do middle school students at a West Michigan middle school want to have available during their unstructured time in school? At this time, the only current option for physical activity for students is a basketball court, a basketball, and a football. Responses from the students reflected their desire to participate in physical and leisure activities. The most common physical activity that students responded with was basketball. The researchers' findings from the interview responses at the West Michigan middle school support the results of previous research. A study by Harrell and colleagues (2003) found that the top five physical activities boys reported participated in were football, basketball, bicycling, running, and baseball. Girls reported their top five activities as talking, running, walking, bicycling, and dancing (Harrell et al., 2003).

Many students, both male and female, responded that they would like to play football during their unstructured time at school. This could be because a football is one of the only pieces of equipment that is available for the students' use during their unstructured time during lunch or because of the sport's popularity in the United States of America's (USA) culture. In a

2010 Harris Interactive poll of USA residents that follow one or more sports, 35 percent cited professional football as their favorite sport (Oakes, 2011). Factors, such as age and race, affect which sports one prefers. Forty-five percent of African Americans in this poll reported professional football as their favorite sport (Oakes, 2011). Some researchers believe that football is such a popular sport due to the game's violent nature, the anticipation, and the excitement of the game. There is also a social side to football which includes creating camaraderie, loyalty, and friendship, not only between players but between spectators as well (Foley, n.d.). In regards to this research study, the middle school students may experience a loyalty to their favorite professional or college team or amongst a team comprised of their peers.

Another reason why numerous students may have responded with football as a desired activity is due to peer influence and students wanting to answer similarly to their peers. Research suggests that relationships with peers become increasingly significant during adolescence (Sin & Koh, 2003). Therefore, the urge to do what peers tell each other to do grows stronger throughout adolescents' lives. Peer pressure is challenging and heightened by peers who consistently test others to break rules or beliefs, which becomes a common theme in adolescents' lives. In this study, students may have discussed their responses with other students who were yet to be interviewed, which may have influenced responses.

While peers have the ability to influence engagement, there are environmental factors that also contribute to engagement within the school setting. The results of a previous research study stated that areas of organized activities and supervised spaces were used less by the students (McKenzie, Crespo, Baquero, & Elder, 2010). The results also indicated that students would engage in more physical activity if loose equipment, such as footballs, basketballs, and jump ropes, were available to them. Increased engagement in physical activity also occurred in areas

that were not directly supervised. This was compared to areas where no equipment was available (McKenzie, Crespo, Baquero, & Elder, 2010). The findings of McKenzie et al. (2010) support the current research study because if more equipment and both indoor and outdoor space was provided to the students, they may be more likely to engage in physical activity.

The current school rules require that the students have to be seated at their lunch table when indoors otherwise they have to be outdoors. These rules along with limited space both in and outside limits the students' abilities to participate in physical activity. With limitations in physical activity, students are more susceptible to obesity. Literature states that obesity is a growing trend in the United States (Story, 1999). This growing trend has been seen in all states and across all ages, races, and socioeconomic groups (Salinsky & Scott, 2003). It has been found that racial and ethnic minorities have higher obesity rates as compared to Caucasians, with Hispanic and African American children having the highest rates (Salinsky & Scott, 2003). This data is relevant to this research because the area in which the school is located has a population that is culturally diverse. With an increase in equipment and designated indoor space for physical activity, students will have more opportunities to be active which will promote a healthy lifestyle.

### **Leisure activities.**

The second research question was what leisure activities do middle school students at a West Michigan middle school want to have available during their unstructured time at school? Using the qualitative responses given by students affirms that they want opportunities to participate in various leisure activities during their unstructured time at school. From the interviews, the researchers determined that students wanted to listen to music, play board and card games, color, and write poetry. All but one student reported a desire to listen to music

during their lunch time.

Research conducted by North and colleagues (2000) found that music is of central importance in most young people's lives; fulfilling social, emotional, and cognitive needs. Two reasons why young people choose to listen to music are for identity formation and mood management (North, Hargreaves, & O'Neil, 2000). Males use music as a means of creating an impression with others whereas females choose to listen to music as a means of mood regulation. The research also found that the central importance of music in the lives of adolescents develops outside rather than inside the classroom. Students would choose to listen to music over other indoor activities (North, Hargreaves, & O'Neil, 2000). The study reported that students listen to music to relieve tension, distract themselves from worries, help pass time, and relieve boredom. Music also allows adolescents to be creative and use their imagination, to be trendy or cool, to create an image for themselves, to please friends, and to reduce loneliness (North, Hargreaves, & O'Neil, 2000).

#### **Available resources.**

The third research question was what available resources does a West Michigan middle school have that support physical and leisure activity participation during students' unstructured time during the school day? Through observations, it was determined that students only had one football and one basketball available to use during their lunch period. The lack of resources has limited the amount of participation by students. It was also concluded that the students' responses may have been influenced by the equipment available to them throughout the school day. This may be due to the students' limited knowledge on what is available for their use during their unstructured time or due to the budgeting that is allotted for the school officials to purchase equipment.

This West Michigan middle school is located in a community of a lower socioeconomic status (SES). Research has found that adolescents from a lower SES are less likely to be active than adolescents from a higher SES (Kanters et al., 2012). This is because those from a lower SES experience more barriers to participation. Some of these barriers include economic costs of participation, lack of access to activities, and maintenance of facilities. If these barriers were to be removed and more opportunities were created for participation in activities, adolescents from a lower SES may yield more benefits (Kanters et al., 2012). This coincides with this research study because if more equipment and resources were available to the students, they would have more opportunities for participation in both leisure and physical activities.

### **Application to Occupational Therapy Practice**

For the purpose of this research study, the PEO theory was used as a frame of reference because of its close connection with occupational therapy. The PEO theory was also used to organize the variables that contribute to the middle school students' perceptions of activities in which they participate during their unstructured time at school. These variables include how the students were viewed within the context of the person, the environment, and the occupation. The PEO theory also helped the researchers develop and consider the interview questions from a holistic perspective by considering the three aspects of this theory as well as the relationship to occupational therapy.

This relationship to occupational therapy includes the primary occupation of adolescents, which is school and play. These occupations help promote health and well-being, social interaction, and overall development that are areas with which occupational therapists are concerned. Promoting these factors may be done by offering the activities and providing equipment in which the students' expressed interest through the interviews. Responses from the



interviews can be used by occupational therapists in the school system to promote meaningful engagement through a focus on education, play, leisure, and social participation (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005). The school administrators at this West Michigan middle school asked the researchers to conduct this study because the administrators understand the knowledge and skills occupational therapists have in working with the adolescent population and the occupations of school and play. The West Michigan middle school is also fortunate to have an occupational therapist on staff that is present and educates others on how work and play with adolescents is within the occupational therapist's scope of practice.

The occupational therapist who is present throughout the school should educate others on how work and play with the adolescent population is within the occupational therapy's scope of practice. The Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF) supports and leads occupational therapists' practice. According to the OTPF (2008b), occupational therapists are knowledgeable about adolescent development as well as play and leisure; they understand the importance of students' engaging in activity during their unstructured time at school.

One way to focus on the occupation of education is Response to Intervention (RtI). RtI is an approach used within general education that focuses on providing instruction and intervention to match students' needs (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005). The role of the occupational therapist in RtI is to assist the general education team with suggestions on how to improve student engagement (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2008b).

Student engagement is improved when school occupational therapists advocate for increased opportunities for participation in physical and leisure activities throughout the day. At

this West Michigan middle school, engagement will increase if the activities students reported as desirable are made as options during the lunch period. To encourage engagement in activities, occupational therapists will need to advocate for an increase in opportunities to engage in activities. Advocating coincides to the philosophy of occupational therapy and there are six main reasons why occupational therapists advocate (Dhillon et al, 2010). These reasons are for personal fulfillment, engagement in occupation, humans' rights and basic needs, power and influence, client-centered practice, and quality of life.

As occupational therapists have a role of encouraging engagement through advocating, they also need to be leaders in the school. Occupational therapists should embrace leadership opportunities no matter how big or small the opportunity (Sylvia, 2012). One leadership opportunity includes providing an occupational perspective to address issues of importance to individuals whose performance and participation are limited. With an occupational therapy education background, therapists can also educate team members, parents, and administration the importance of participation in both physical and leisure activities. Occupational therapists can also think critically in order to make situations and environments conducive to students' participation in occupations (Sylvia, 2012). Again, this could be accomplished through incorporating activities the students reported as wanted.

Occupational therapists also need to be encouragers of participation in activities. In order to help adolescents participate more in activities (physical or leisure), educators, administration, and occupational therapists must help students enjoy activity. This can be done by creating games and lessons that are fun and tailored to the population. Helping students believe that participation in physical and leisure activities is fun, challenging, and effective for their bodies,

is the goal for increasing engagement. This belief will enable them to place an emphasis on activity participation long into their adult years (What are the most effective, 2011).

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations of this study which impacted the results. These limitations included a small sample size, lack of a standardized assessment tool, selection bias, the inability to generalize results, the researchers were not formally trained in interviewing adolescents, and the responses that were elicited from the adolescents were limited. The small sample size might have been due to a lack of time as well as difficulty obtaining informed consent forms. Students were asked to have their parents sign and return the informed consent forms. Due to parental dynamics, family schedules, and parental investment in the students' lives, only 23 informed consent forms were returned which resulted in a smaller sample size.

An additional limitation was that interview questions were created by the researchers based on existing literature and since the interview questions were not standardized, they lacked reliability and validity. A selection bias also limited the results of this study because a non-random sample was used and participants did not equally represent all cultures, ages, and grades. Due to this research only conducted at only one West Michigan middle school, the results are not generalizable because this school represents a small population.

The last limitation is that the researchers were not formally trained to interview middle school students which may have impacted the responses given by the students. Formal interview training may have taught the researchers various ways to best interview adolescents as well as given the researchers an understanding of how adolescents make decisions. In this research study, the responses elicited from students were limited and often were one-word answers. Spear (2000) suggests that the decision making capacity of adolescents may be more vulnerable to

disruption by the stresses and strains of everyday living as compared to adults. Adolescents may also exhibit considerably poorer cognitive performance under circumstances involving stress and time-limited situations. In this study, the researchers had not met the adolescent students before the interview, so the students may have felt stressed about that aspect of the interviews or because of a perceived time limit.

Another limitation as a result of the researchers not having formal interview training, is not knowing how to best interact with the students during the interview. Accurate expressions of empathy are especially critical in encounters with adolescents, as it is common for the adolescent to experience a lack of acceptance and understanding from adults (Spear, 2000). Motivational interviewing (MI) is one way to interview adolescents and could be beneficial for future studies which involve adolescents. In MI, reflective statements are used to communicate accurate empathy and to allow the adolescent to respond without feeling like they will experience consequences. The interpersonal spirit of MI focuses on supporting autonomy, taking a collaborative approach with adolescents, and evoking, rather than instilling, motivation for change. The development of autonomy is one of the key tasks of adolescence, and this independence of thoughts, feelings, and decisions are basic human needs. When the basic human need of independence or autonomy is blocked or taken away, adolescents are more likely to resist or withdraw and not interact with adults or others. Therefore the interviewer must make effort to avoid pressuring the adolescent for change and find opportunities for choice.

### **Suggestions for Further Research/Modifications**

The researchers determined suggestions and modifications for future research. The researchers suggest using a different form of data collection which could include a focus group or a questionnaire to potentially elicit more participants and more detailed responses. Future

research should also consider the socioeconomic status of the community in which the participants live as this may affect the available resources as well as influence the activities the students respond with as desired. A follow up longitudinal study should be completed at this West Michigan middle school to determine if more students are participating in physical and leisure activities after the researchers' suggestions are implemented. To support this research, an additional study should be conducted at another West Michigan middle school that has a similar socioeconomic status so that results can be compared and contrasted.

### **Conclusion and Summary**

The purpose of this research study was to identify how enrolled students at this West Michigan middle school want to spend their unstructured time during the school day, specifically their lunch period. The results may be beneficial for future school programming and incorporating activities that students would like to have available. The researchers answered the following research questions:

1. What physical activities do middle school students at a West Michigan middle school want to have available during their unstructured time in school?
2. What leisure activities do middle school students at a West Michigan middle school want to have available during their unstructured time in school?
3. What available resources does a West Michigan middle school have that support physical and leisure activity participation during students' unstructured time during the school day?

The results of this study indicated that students would like to participate in a variety of physical and leisure activities such as basketball, soccer, football, listening to music, and playing board games. However, it was found that the West Michigan middle school has limited resources and

equipment available for students to engage in these desired activities during their unstructured time. Additionally, through the development and implementation of a lunch hour program (see Appendix D), the researchers believe that offering supplementary activities and equipment for the students' use during their lunch period will increase their occupational engagement in meaningful and purposeful activities.

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### Appendix A: Informed Consent

**Title:** A Qualitative Study of Middle School Students' Perceptions of Leisure Time

**Researchers:** This study is being conducted by occupational therapy graduate students, Stephanie Hovick, Justine Gonzalez Bratt, and Kristin Cameron at Grand Valley State University. One of the components of our curriculum is to carry out a research project.

**Purpose:** We hope to learn about the students' thoughts about their free time at school and about what activities they would like to be available for them.

**Procedures:** If you agree to permit your child to participate, your child will complete an interview with a researcher about his or her thoughts on what activities he or she would like to be available. This will be given during fourth period and will take approximately 15-20 minutes.

**Risks:** There are no expected risks or discomforts associated with participation in this study. This study has been approved by the Human Research Review Committee at Grand Valley State University. Contact information for any questions about this study is at the bottom of this form.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your child's participation in this research study is completely voluntary. He or she does not have to participate and may quit at any time without any penalty.

**Privacy and Confidentiality:** Neither your name nor your child's name will be given to anyone. All the information collected from your child will be anonymous.

**Agreement to Participate:** By signing this permission form below, you are stating the following:

- The details of this research study have been explained to me including what my child is being asked to do and the anticipated risks;
- I have been given contact information for any questions I may have in the future;
- I am voluntarily agreeing to allow my child to participate in the research as described on this form;
- I may ask more questions and my child may quit participating at any time without penalty.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Initial here) I have been given a copy of this document for my records.

Print Child's Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Your Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Sign Your Name in ink:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_

**(OVER)**

If you have any questions about this study you may contact the researchers as follows:

Name: Stephanie Hovick  
Researcher  
E-mail: [hovicks@mail.gvsu.edu](mailto:hovicks@mail.gvsu.edu)

Name: Justine Gonzalez Bratt  
Researcher  
E-mail: [gonzajus@mail.gvsu.edu](mailto:gonzajus@mail.gvsu.edu)

Name: Kristin Cameron  
Researcher  
E-mail: [camerokr@mail.gvsu.edu](mailto:camerokr@mail.gvsu.edu)

Name: Denise Meier, MA, OTR/L  
Research Committee Chair  
E-mail: [meierd@gvsu.edu](mailto:meierd@gvsu.edu)

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research participant, please contact the **Research Protections Office** at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI  
Phone: 616-331-3197  
E-mail: [HRRC@gvsu.edu](mailto:HRRC@gvsu.edu)

*This research protocol has been approved by the Human Research Review Committee at Grand Valley State University. File No. 12-176-H Expiration: April 18, 2013.*

**PLEASE RETURN SIGNED CONSENT FORM TO SCHOOL BY APRIL 24, 2012.**

**REMINDER: YOUR CHILD WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY IF CONSENT FORM IS NOT RETURNED BY THE ABOVE DATE.**

## Appendix B: Assent Form

### **A Qualitative Study of Middle School Students' Perceptions of Leisure Time Assent Form**

We are doing a study to try to learn about the activities you would like to be available during your lunch time after you are done eating. We are asking you to help because we do not know very much about what activities students your age want to be available for them to use.

If you agree to be in our study, we are going to ask you some questions about what activities you want to do during your lunch time after you are done eating. We will want to know what activities you wish you could do during lunch after you are done eating. For example, you will be asked what activity you want to be available.

You can ask questions at any time that you might have about this study. Also, if you decide at any time not to finish, you may stop whenever you want. Remember, these questions are only about what you think. There are no right or wrong answers because this is not a test.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Remember, being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later.

#### **Agreement**

I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I do not have to do it. Stephanie Hovick, Justine Gonzalez Bratt, and Kristin Cameron have answered all my questions.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Study Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_

Date



## Appendix C: Students' Leisure Time Questionnaire

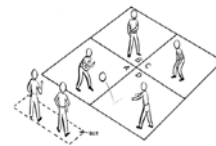
1. What grade are you in?
2. How old are you?
3. Male\_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_
4. In the last week, how did you spend your time after you ate lunch?
5. If you could do anything during your lunch time, what would you want to do?
6. Think about the last time you had a good time during your lunch time. What made that time fun?
7. Would you want to do this activity at school? (referring to question 6)
8. What games would you like to play during your lunch time?
9. Would you like to \_\_\_\_\_ during your lunch time?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Play board games
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Play card games
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Read or write poetry
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Color
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Journal
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Listen to music
10. What sport would you like to play during your lunch time?
11. For the following items, rate them from the scale provided.
  - 0 = Would not like to do the activity at all
  - 1 = Would sort of like to do the activity
  - 2 = Would really like to do the activity
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Basketball
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Volleyball
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Jump rope
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Football
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Four square
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Corn hole
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Running
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Dancing
12. When you get home from school, what is your favorite physical activity that you like to do?
13. If you were talking to the principal about what play equipment to buy for your use during lunch, what would you tell him?

## Appendix D: Example Lunch Hour Program

# LUNCH HOUR PROGRAM

## Program Ideas

- Set up assorted activities on the blacktop, such as hopscotch, jump rope and four square.
- Play a large group activity with everyone involved, such as volleyball or kickball.
- Assign students to different groups for organized physical activities, and let them rotate stations after a few minutes.
- Have one large individual event in a designated area, such as class walks or runs.
- Start a walking club. Track student distance on a large visible map across the US.
- Have a teacher offer prompts and encouragement for activity to engage students:
  - How many times can you jump the rope in one minute?
  - How many baskets can you make in one minute?
- If recess must be moved indoors due to weather conditions, use vacant classrooms, all-purpose rooms, cafeterias, gymnasiums or hallways for an active recess. Ideas:
  - Set up fitness stations in the halls.
  - Provide board and card games as well as art supplies for students' use
  - Play music and make up dance moves.



## Guidelines

- Have sign-up sheet for different sporting events (Ex. Basketball team for a game during lunch)
- Equipment check-out system (Students would exchange student ID for piece of equipment during lunch period)
- Supervising (OT coordinate a schedule of teachers who volunteer one day a week during lunch to facilitate program)



**Funding**

- Grants
  - Muskegon Community Foundation, The National Center for Boundless Playgrounds, CVS Caremark Charitable Trust
- In-kind Donations
  - Target, Playskool, Toys-R-Us
- Community/School Fundraisers
  - Talent shows, walks, runs, raffles, silent auctions

**Cost**

- Basketball: \$5-25 (Walmart)
- Volleyball: \$10-30 (Walmart)
- Kickball: \$5 (Walmart)
- Football: \$5-25 (Walmart)
- Soccer ball/goal: \$5-50 (Walmart)
- Chalk: \$1-5 (Walmart)

**Benefits of Engagement in Activity**

- Unstructured play helps children manage stress and reduce anxiety.
- Recess creates a setting in which children learn and practice social skills and must be creative with how they choose to spend their free time.
- Children who take breaks between performing school tasks are more attentive and alert afterward.
- Recess allows children to explore, which stimulates their imaginations and fosters critical thinking skills.
- Breaks between rigorous studying or working improve brain function and memory.
- Children who receive more recess behave better and are likely to learn more.

**References**

Active Recess (n.d). Retrieved from <http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/pdf/pasapartofschoolday.pdf>

Vermont Healthy Schools Resource: Physical Activity (n.d.). Retrieved from [http://healthvermont.gov/local/school/documents/Healthy%20Schools%20Resource\\_Activity.pdf](http://healthvermont.gov/local/school/documents/Healthy%20Schools%20Resource_Activity.pdf)

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## Appendix E: Executive Summary

### A Qualitative Study of Middle School Students' Perceptions of Unstructured Time Executive Summary

#### **Abstract**

*Objective:* The purpose of this study was to identify middle school students' perceptions of unstructured time by determining physical and leisure activities the students would want to have available for their use at school.

*Method:* A researcher developed questionnaire (Students' Leisure Time Questionnaire) was used to interview 23 middle school students (ages 11 to 15) regarding their perceptions of activities during unstructured time. A phenomenological design was used, incorporating open-ended qualitative questions.

*Results:* The students were able to identify activities in which they would like to participate during their unstructured time at school. Students primarily indicated football and basketball as preferred physical activities and listening to music as a preferred leisure activity. The available resources for student use were limited to a basketball, basketball court, and a football which may have affected the students' responses.

*Conclusion:* The results of this study could be used to implement a program that would allow students to participate in activities that they identified during the interviews. By incorporating the students' preferences into a new program, an occupational therapist may be able to more effectively engage the students in activities that are motivating and engaging for students.

#### **Findings**

Below the leisure and physical activity preferences are listed in rank order.

##### Leisure Activity Preferences

- Listening to music
- Card games
- Board games
- Reading/writing poetry
- Coloring
- Journaling

##### Physical Activity Preferences

- Four square
- Football
- Basketball
- Running
- Volleyball
- Jump rope
- Dancing
- Corn hole

#### **Benefits of Engagement in Activity**

- Unstructured play helps children manage stress and reduce anxiety.
- Recess creates a setting in which children learn and practice social skills and must be creative with how they choose to spend their free time.
- Children who take breaks between performing school tasks are more attentive and alert afterward.
- Breaks between rigorous studying or working improve brain function and memory.
- Children who receive more recess behave better and are likely to learn more.

### **Lunch Hour Program Ideas**

- Set up assorted activities on the blacktop, such as hopscotch, jump rope and four square.
- Play a large group activity with everyone involved, such as volleyball or kickball.
- Assign students to different groups for organized physical activities, and let them rotate stations after a few minutes.
- Have one large individual event in a designated area, such as class walks or runs.
- Start a walking club. Track student distance on a large visible map across the US.
- Have a teacher offer prompts and encouragement for activity to engage students:
  - How many times can you jump the rope in one minute?
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- If recess must be moved indoors due to weather conditions, use vacant classrooms, all-purpose rooms, cafeterias, gymnasiums or hallways for an active recess. Ideas:
  - Set up fitness stations in the halls.
  - Provide board and card games as well as art supplies for students' use
  - Play music and make up dance moves.

#### **Potential Costs (Walmart)**

- Basketball: \$5-25
- Volleyball: \$10-30
- Kickball: \$5
- Football: \$5-25
- Soccer ball/goal: \$5-50
- Chalk: \$1-5

### **What Can Occupational Therapy Do?**

- Promote health and well-being, social interaction, and overall development by offering activities and providing equipment
- Locate potential grant sources for funding of the students' desired activities
- Educate the staff and administrators on the importance of engagement in activities
- Advocate for increased opportunities for participation in physical and leisure activities throughout the day

#### **References**

Active Recess. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/pdf/pasaspartofschoolday.pdf>

Vermont Healthy Schools Resource: Physical Activity. (n.d.). Retrieved from [http://healthvermont.gov/local/school/documents/Health%20Schools%20Resource\\_Activity.pdf](http://healthvermont.gov/local/school/documents/Health%20Schools%20Resource_Activity.pdf)

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**Keywords:** physical activity, leisure activity, unstructured time