IMPROVING FITNESS AND WELLBEING IN SENIOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

A research project conducted by the Priority Research Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition at the University of Newcastle. Funding provided by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the NSW Department of Education.

**The Burn 2 Learn (B2L) program uses high intensity interval training (HIIT) to improve students’ health and fitness.** Students will engage in 2-3 exercise sessions each week over two school terms. Sessions last just 5-15 minutes, resulting in minimal disruption of regularly scheduled classes. Research shows HIIT can improve fitness and health as much as endurance training, but in a fraction of the time!

Recent studies have shown that regular participation in high intensity or ‘vigorous’ exercise can improve:
- Short-term memory
- Focus and concentration
- Multi-tasking skills

By integrating HIIT into the school day, students will have the opportunity to engage in enjoyable activities that will recharge their brains, allowing them to think effectively and remain focused in class.

About 50% of teenagers experience psychological distress, and the HSC is a very stressful time period for students. Exercise is a proven strategy for dealing with stress, but most senior students are not active enough. Through B2L, students get all the psychological benefits of exercise in short sessions they can do with their friends!

**Research evaluation** — The B2L program will be evaluated over 1 school year using a randomised controlled trial (schools will receive B2L straight away or the following year). To be eligible to participate, schools must have at least 2 teachers of year 11 students willing to facilitate the B2L exercise sessions during class time (2 times per week).

- Starting in Term 1 (2019)
- Approx. 40 Year 11 students per school will be recruited
- Assessments will be conducted in Term 1, Term 3, and Term 1 (2020)
- Assessments will take students approx. 1 hour each to complete and will include cognitive function, aerobic fitness, muscular fitness, body composition, and mental health

**Benefits to teachers and schools**
- 8 hours of NESA accredited professional learning for 2 teachers
- Purpose designed curricular materials linked to PDHPE, SLR and Crossroads syllabi
- Resources and equipment to support the program (~$2000)

Please consider implementing the Burn 2 Learn program in your school. For more information or to express interest in your school’s involvement in this project, please contact Dr Jordan Smith, University of Newcastle.

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