



HIGH 5 FOR FITNESS
SPECIAL OLYMPICS



HIGH 5 LESSON EVALUATION PHASE 1 REPORT 2023-2024

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Project Overview

01



High 5 for Fitness (“High 5”) is a comprehensive set of resources designed to empower students to take charge of their own fitness by promoting healthy physical activity, nutrition, and hydration habits. The program aims to increase students' knowledge and awareness of healthy behaviors while actively engaging them in activities that improve flexibility, strength, and endurance.

High 5 adopts an inclusive approach, making it suitable for students with and without intellectual disabilities (ID). The resources are adaptable to different age groups—8-11, 12-14, and 15-21 years—and include an educator’s instructional fitness guide, exercise cards, and demonstration videos.

To facilitate structured implementation of High 5 for Fitness in schools, 12 detailed lesson plans were developed. These plans provide step-by-step activities, instructional strategies, and supplementary materials to help educators or facilitators incorporate High 5 into their classes. Designed for delivery twice a week over six weeks, the lessons align with the goals of a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program.

To ensure the quality, relevance, and usability of the newly developed High 5 resources, Special Olympics (SO) Fitness initiated a two-phase pilot evaluation project in collaboration with SO Programs in the United States. The Phase I evaluation focused on assessing the feasibility of implementing the High 5 lessons in school settings. This phase was critical in identifying the strengths of the resources and determining areas where improvements could be made to enhance their impact and usability.

Three Special Olympics Programs—Wyoming, Missouri, and Maryland—collaborated with SOI staff on the High 5 pilot evaluation project, with specific responsibilities and tasks carried out between August 2023 and July 2024. This collaborative effort ensured the effective delivery and evaluation of the High 5 pilot, leveraging the strengths of all partners to achieve project goals.

SO Program Staff

- After an informational meeting with SOI, Program staff identified and recruited schools and educators within their states to implement the High 5 lessons in 2–3 classes.
- They facilitated communication between educators and SOI throughout the project, ensuring effective collaboration.
- Program staff provided ongoing technical support as educators prepared for and implemented the High 5 programming.
- They assisted educators in completing measurement and evaluation activities following program implementation.
- Additionally, Program staff participated in a debriefing focus group, offering feedback on the overall project.

Educators

- Educators attended a remote training session led by SOI to familiarize themselves with the High 5 resources and pilot project protocols.
- They received comprehensive project materials, including lesson plans, High 5 resources (guides and activity cards), evaluation surveys, and supplementary documents.
- Between January and May 2024, each educator conducted 6 weeks of High 5 programming, delivering two structured lessons per week (30–40 minutes each).
- They tracked student attendance during all 12 High 5 sessions and completed measurement and evaluation activities, providing critical data for the project's assessment.

SOI Staff

- SOI staff played a central role in supporting the pilot project by offering training and ongoing technical support to both Program staff and educators.
- They conducted site visits to observe program implementation, provide real-time guidance, and document classroom activities.
- SOI also ensured that necessary funding was available for pilot activities through the Unified Champion Schools (UCS) budget, covering teacher stipends (at some sites), equipment, and printed resources.

Measurement & Evaluation

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Several metrics were employed to evaluate the feasibility of implementing the High 5 lessons in schools, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture comprehensive feedback. Together, these evaluation methods provided valuable insights to inform revisions and enhance the scalability and effectiveness of the High 5 lessons.

Student Survey

- A survey was designed to assess student enjoyment and satisfaction with the High 5 lessons.
- It consisted of 7 questions, each with 3 response options.
- Sample questions included: "How much did you like doing the High 5 for Fitness activities?" and "Did you learn new things about physical fitness and healthy eating?"
- The survey was administered to student participants following the final High 5 session to gather reflective feedback on the program.

Measurement & Evaluation

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Educator Weekly Survey

- A survey for educators was created to record their perceptions and observations after each High 5 lesson.
- It included 8 questions with 3-4 response options, focusing on topics like preparation effort, student engagement, and the necessity of lesson modifications.
- Examples of questions were: "How much effort did it take to plan for and organize this lesson?" and "Did you find it necessary to modify the lesson plan?"
- Educators completed the survey 12 times, once for each lesson, enabling continuous feedback to identify areas for improvement.

Debriefing Focus Group

- A debriefing session was conducted on April 3, 2024, involving 5 educators and 2 SOI staff members, facilitated by SOI staff member Ashley Reid.
- Participants responded to 5 open-ended questions designed to gather insights and feedback about the pilot project.
- In addition to discussing the lessons, participants shared general observations and provided actionable recommendations for refining the High 5 program.

Measurement & Evaluation

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Site Visits

- SOI staff (Ashley Reid) conducted visits to 4 classrooms—2 high schools, 1 middle school, and 1 elementary school—across 3 states to observe lesson implementation.
- Observations focused on key aspects such as the ease of activity setup, clarity of the teacher’s verbal instructions and demonstrations, adherence to the lesson plan, and overall student engagement during activities.
- These visits also allowed SOI staff to provide in-the-moment support to educators as needed, ensuring a smooth implementation process.

Engagement Summary

- 3 SO Programs: Wyoming, Missouri, and Maryland
- 5 Educators
- 120 Students
- 1 elementary class, 1 middle school class, 3 high school classes

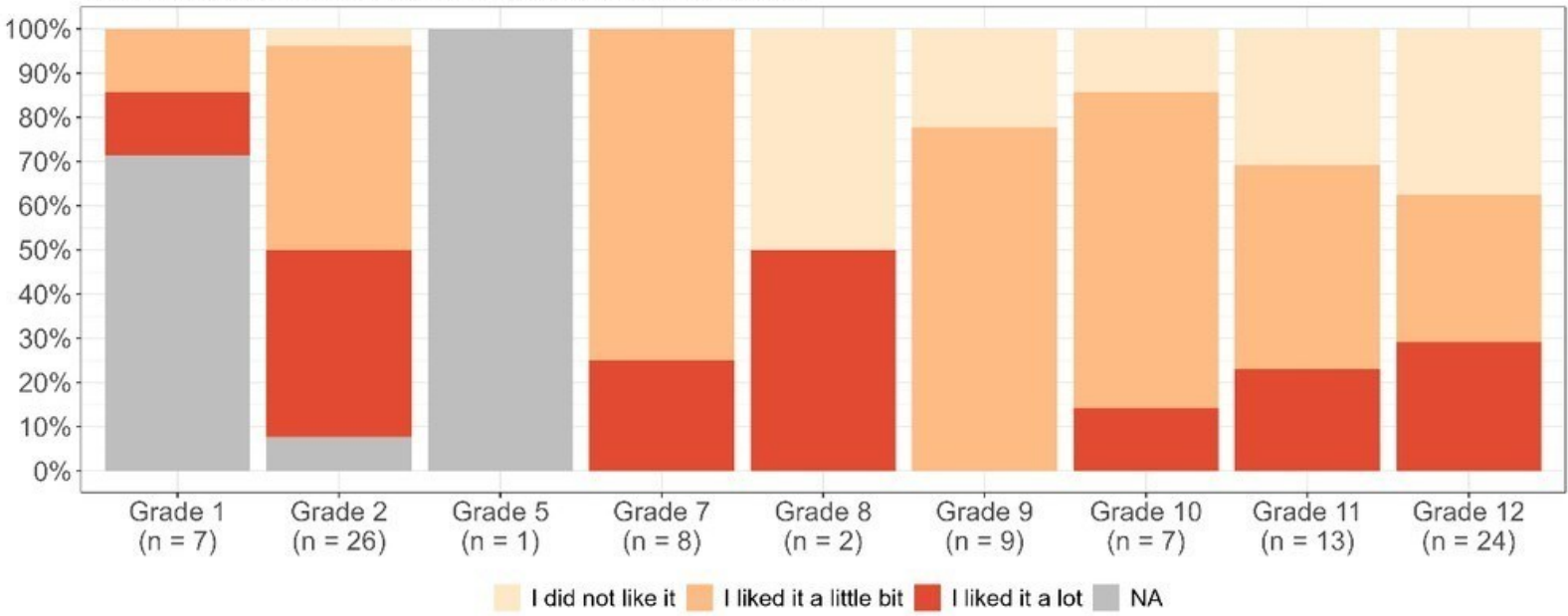
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Student Survey Results

The figures below display the key findings from the student survey by grade. It is important to note that the number of student respondents in each grade differs greatly and that in a few of the grades there are only 1-2 students, which means the percentages should be interpreted with caution.

Enjoyment

How much did you like doing the High 5 for Fitness activities?

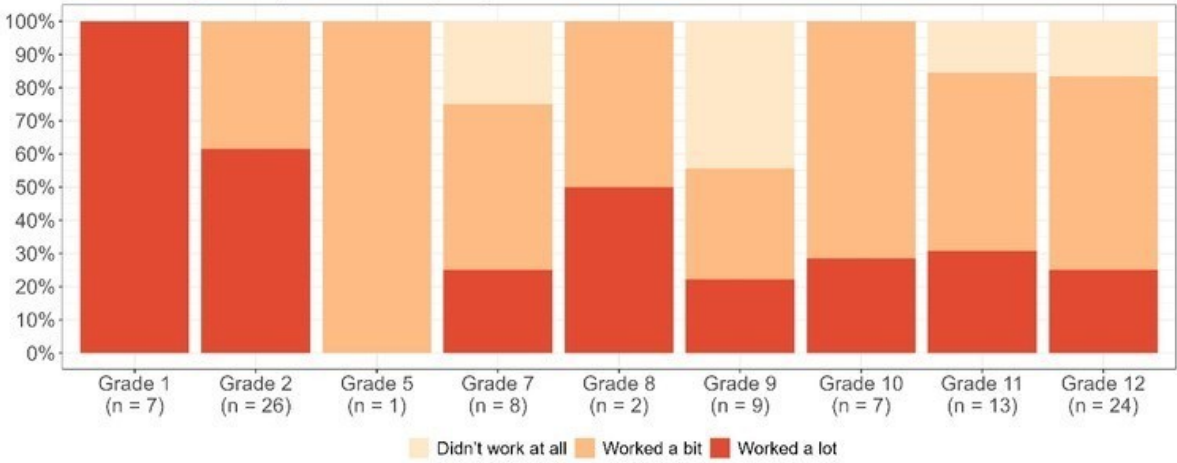


Across most grades, a significant portion of students reported liking the activities, either "a little bit" or "a lot." Grades 1-2 have a high proportion of "NA" responses. In grades 7–12, more students explicitly stated they liked the activities. Very few students selected "I did not like it," suggesting that the activities were generally well-received across age groups.

Work

Most students indicated that their bodies "Worked a bit" or "Worked a lot."

How much did your body work when doing the games and activities?

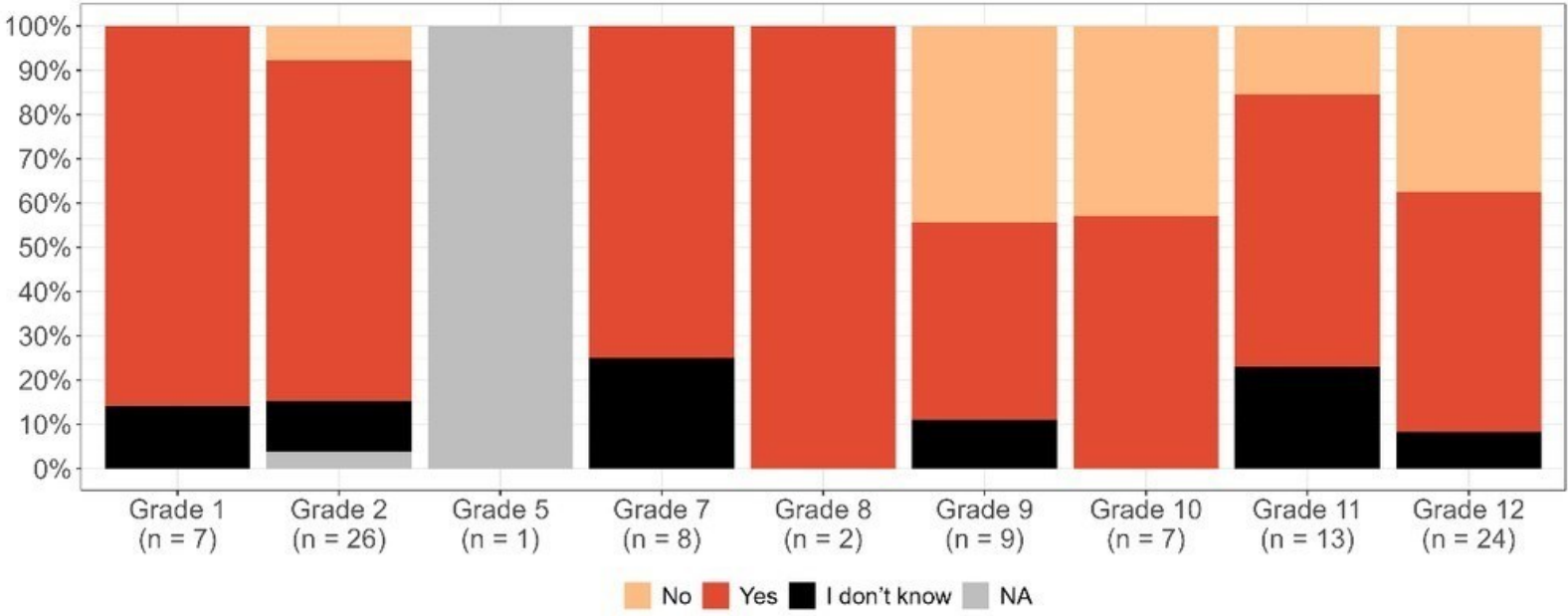


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Student Survey Results

Learn about Fitness

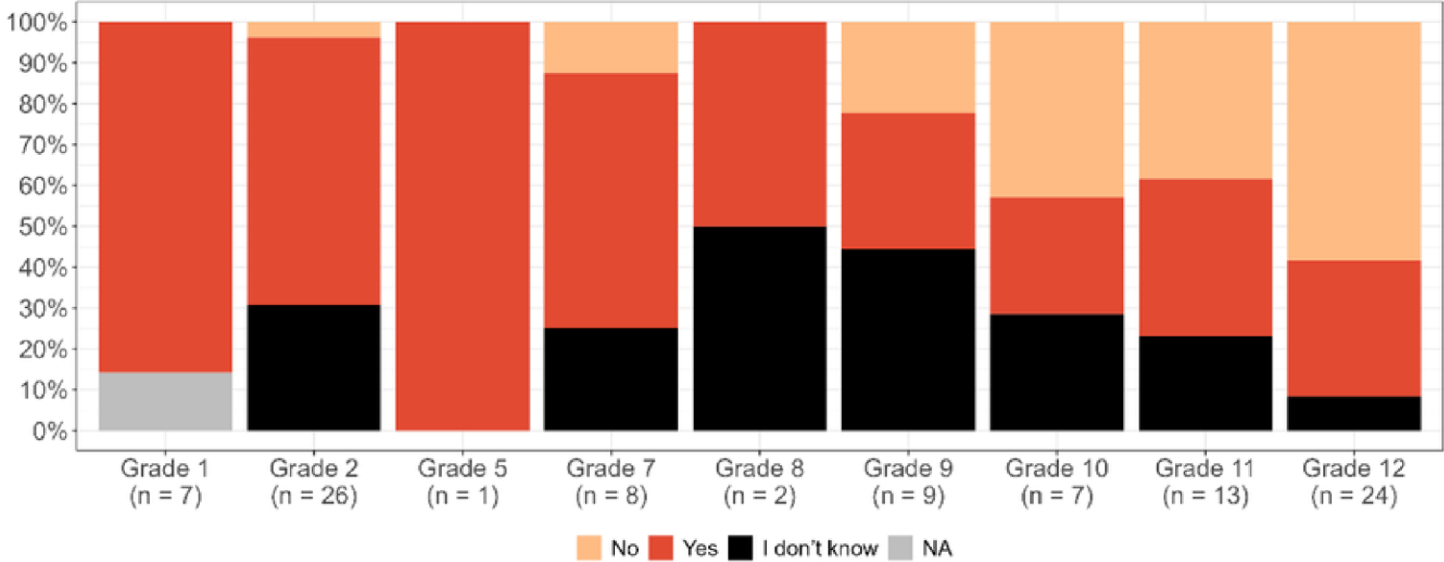
Did you learn new things about physical fitness?



Most students responded "Yes," indicating that the activities effectively conveyed new information about fitness. Younger grades overwhelmingly responded positively while higher grades have a more "No" and "I don't know" responses. This suggests that while the lessons were generally successful in teaching fitness concepts, impact may diminish with older students, highlighting the need for adaptations to maintain engagement.

Interest in Future High 5 Programming

Would you like to do the High 5 for Fitness activities at school again sometime?



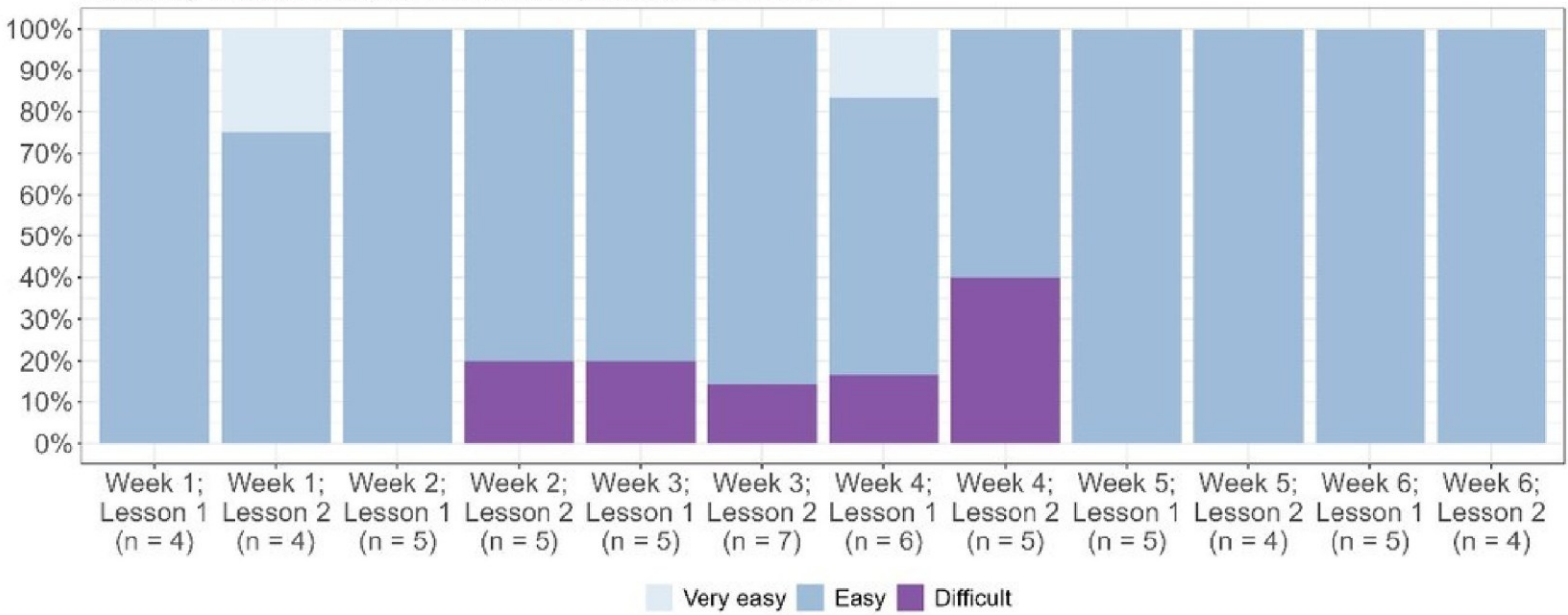
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Educator Weekly
Survey Results

The figures below display the key findings from the educator weekly survey. The number of educator respondents was low, which means the percentages should be interpreted with caution.

Difficulty in Implementing

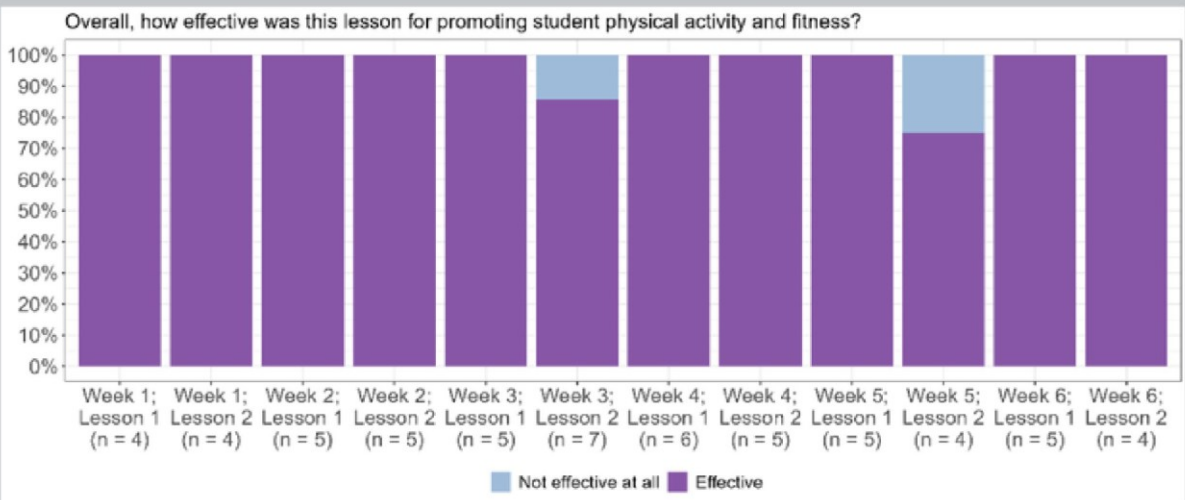
How easy or difficult was this lesson to implement in your class?



The graph shows that the lessons varied in their perceived difficulty by educators, with some being relatively easy to implement and others being more difficult. However, the overall trend seems to be that the lessons became progressively more difficult to implement over the 6-week period.

Promoting Physical Activity

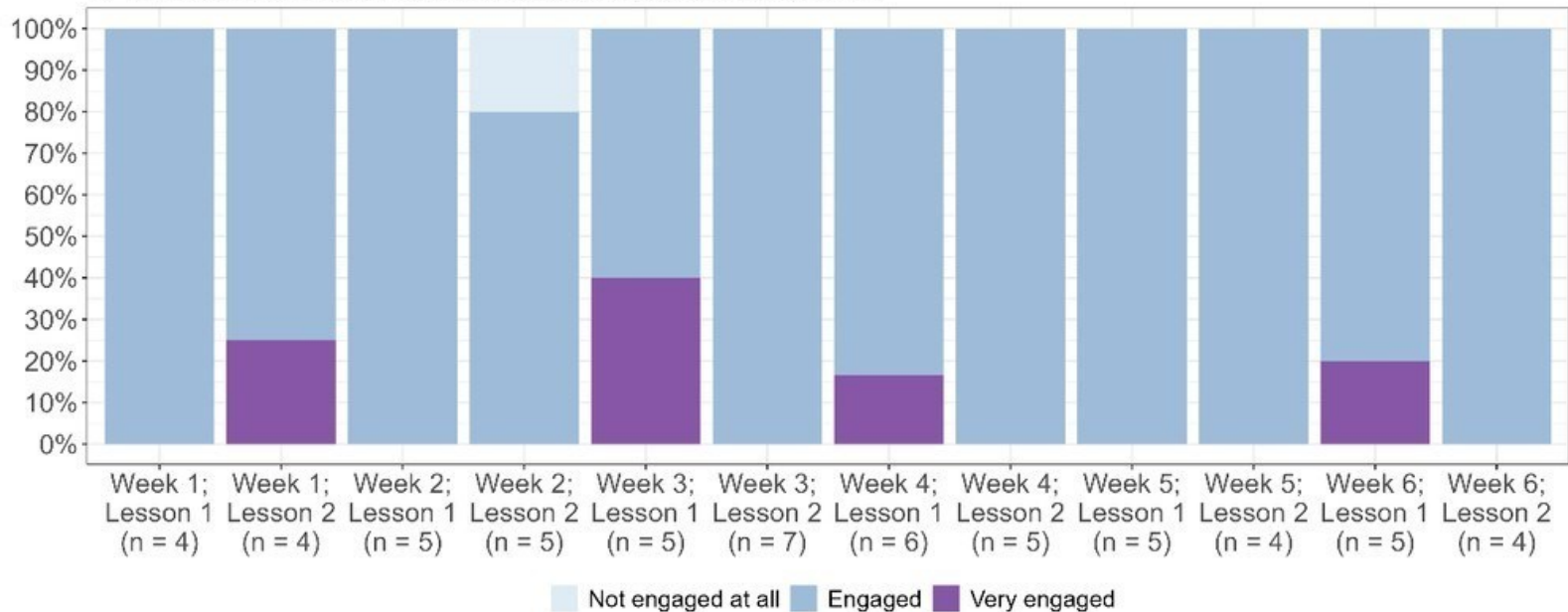
For most weeks, over 70% of educators considered the lessons to be effective



Educator Weekly Survey Results

Student Engagement

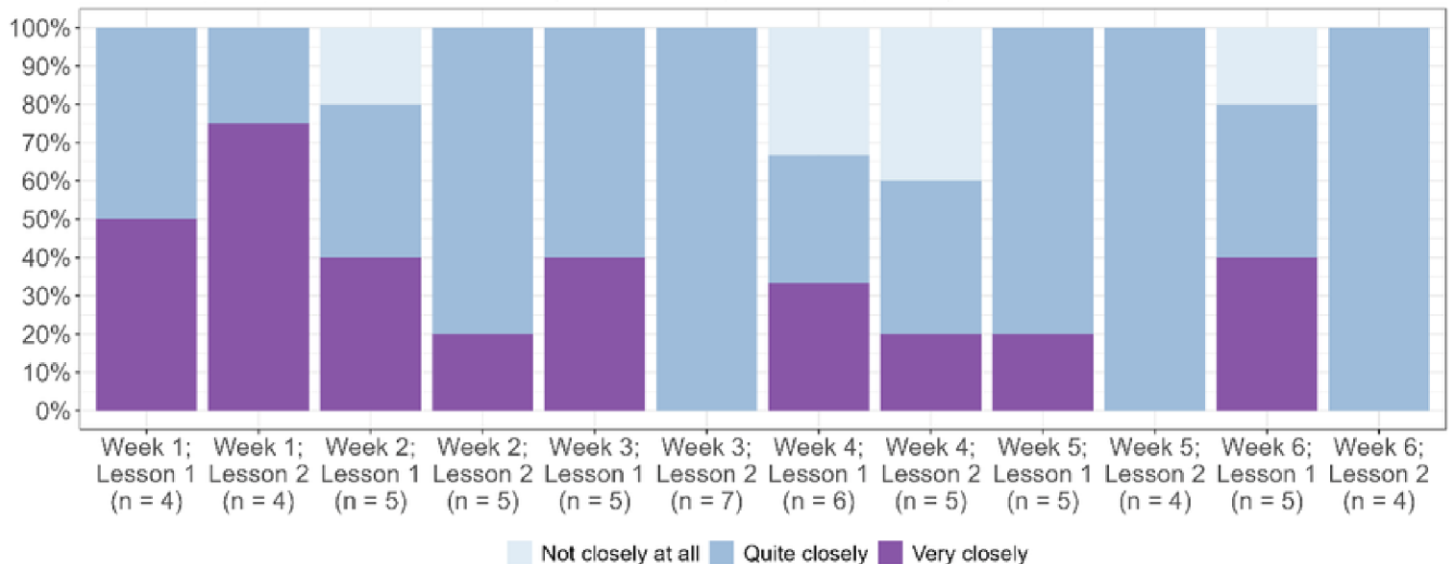
To what extent were your students actively engaged in this lesson?



Educators reported that student engagement was generally high, with the majority of lessons seeing at least 50% of students engaged or very engaged. However, there were some lessons, particularly in the earlier weeks, where a significant portion of students (around 20-30%) were not engaged at all as perceived by educators.

Follow the Lesson Plan

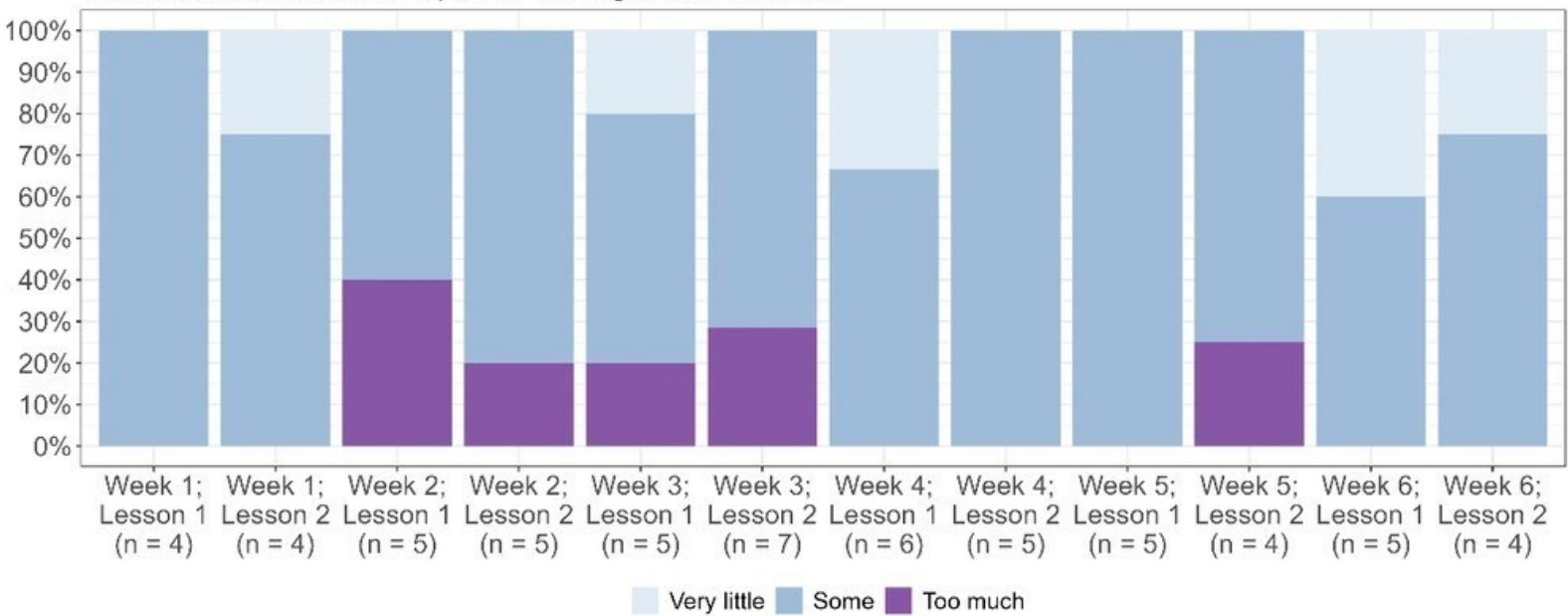
How closely did you follow the lesson plan (i.e., equipment, instructions, format)?



Educator Weekly Survey Results

Effort to Plan and Organize

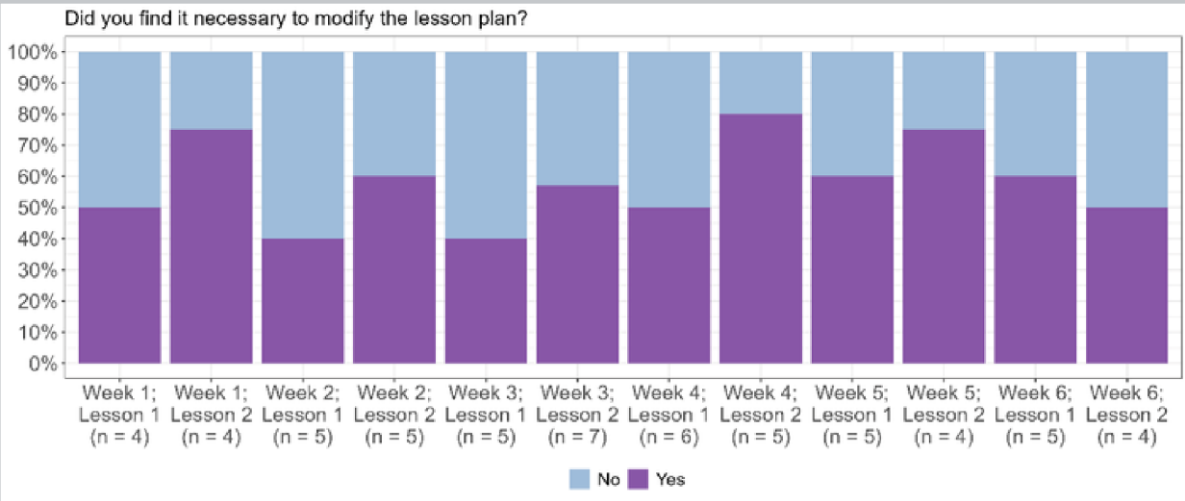
How much effort did it take to plan for and organize this lesson?



The effort required to plan and organize the lessons varied across weeks. For some weeks, the majority of educators felt the effort was "Very little" or "Some", while for other weeks a significant portion felt the effort was "Too much". There is no clear pattern of the effort becoming easier or more difficult over the 6-week period. Educators had to adjust their preparation and organization approach depending on the requirements of each lesson.

Modify the Lessons

For each lesson plan, anywhere from 40-80% of teachers stated that it was necessary to modify the lesson plan.



Debriefing Focus Groups – Key Takeaways



Five teachers and two SO Program staff members participated in the debriefing focus group. The following is a summary of responses to key questions.

- The folder provided for the pilot project was well-organized and helpful, especially when distributed early.
- Preparing materials (e.g., cutting and copying) was time-intensive and required significant effort from teachers.
- Teachers with prior experience using the High 5 resource found preparation easier and less burdensome.
- Some lesson plans were too advanced, with complex terms and activities that challenged students with IDD or reading difficulties.
- Peer mentors were crucial for adapting lessons and ensuring students with IDD felt accomplished, but their absence would make scaling difficult.
- The content was too extensive for one class session; splitting lessons into smaller parts (e.g., one activity per class) was suggested.
- Visual aids needed improvement, including larger fonts, poster-sized images, and more engaging props like beanbags or food models.
- While repetition reinforced skills, some lessons lacked gradual progression, making exercises too hard for some students.
- The lessons aligned with PE National Standards but would benefit from greater flexibility to allow teachers to customize the sequence.
- Teachers and mentors often modified activities to make them more fun, interactive, and game-like, addressing a lack of initial engagement in some lessons.

Site Visit Results

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During site visits to various schools, key observations were made regarding implementation. These observations revealed opportunities for enhancement in lesson content, material setup, and teacher and student engagement.

- **Lesson Adaptations:** Many lessons lacked necessary modifications for students with severe mobility challenges. Nutrition-related activities were frequently skipped, suggesting these parts were either too complex or did not resonate with students.
- **Material Setup:** Significant preparation was required, such as enlarging and laminating materials, which added to the complexity of setting up the class.
- **Teacher Engagement:** Inexperienced teachers seemed apprehensive about effectively managing the classes, highlighting the need for more comprehensive training or support. The involvement of physical therapists and peer student helpers positively impacted the lessons, demonstrating the importance of support systems.
- **Student Engagement:** Physical activities were generally well-received, while segments intended to teach nutrition/hydration were less engaging, with many students struggling to participate. This suggests a mismatch between the lesson content and student engagement levels.
- **Suggested Improvements:** Based on observations, it is recommended to provide more accessible exercises and simplify the content to better align with student abilities and interests.





This pilot project revealed several key insights into the implementation of the High 5 for Fitness lessons in schools:

- **Feasibility:** Delivering the High 5 lessons in school settings is achievable, demonstrating the potential for broader implementation.
- **Lesson Length and Preparation:** The lessons were overly lengthy and required substantial preparation and planning from educators, presenting a barrier to effective delivery.
- **Engagement and Complexity:** The lessons lacked sufficient engagement for students, and some content was overly complex, underscoring the need for simplification and added interactivity.
- **Role of Peer Mentors:** Peer mentors played a crucial role in the successful delivery of the lessons, highlighting their value in the teaching process.
- **Flexibility in Lesson Order:** A rigid, sequential lesson structure proved impractical. A more flexible approach would better accommodate varying classroom dynamics.
- **Adaptability by Educators:** Many educators adapted the lessons to align with available class time, formats, and specific student needs, suggesting that customization options are essential.
- **Need for Revision and Evaluation:** Significant revisions are required to improve lesson content, structure, and delivery. Ongoing evaluation by educators is essential to ensure the lessons' quality and effectiveness.

These findings offer a foundation for refining the High 5 for Fitness curriculum and inform strategies for enhancing its impact and usability in diverse educational contexts.

Next Steps

As Phase II of this evaluation project commences, the following steps will be prioritized to enhance the High 5 for Fitness Lessons:

- **Comprehensive Lesson Revision:** Revise the High 5 lessons with a heightened emphasis on integrating physical fitness training as a core component.
- **Infusion of Fitness Education:** Embed targeted fitness education within the lessons to better support both educators and students in achieving fitness goals.
- **Streamlined Lesson Design:** Significantly shorten lesson durations and omit non-essential content to improve accessibility and reduce preparation time for educators.
- **Adaptable and Progressive Activities:** Develop fitness activities that are progressive, easily modifiable, and adaptable to diverse classroom needs and student abilities.
- **Enhanced Support Strategies:** Integrate actionable tips for peer mentors and paraeducators to ensure consistent and effective lesson delivery.
- **Age-Appropriate and Enjoyable Content:** Ensure all fitness activities are developmentally suitable for the target age groups and are designed to be engaging and enjoyable for students.
- **Collaborative Evaluation:** Partner with Special Olympics (SO) programs to rigorously evaluate the revised lessons across elementary, middle, and high school classrooms, gathering feedback for continued improvement.

