



Background

Kids in Parks TRACK Trails (KIP) is an innovative intervention that promotes not only physical activity but the benefits of learning about and experiencing nature. In 2012, KIP received the “Let’s Move! Champion of Change” award from Michelle Obama.

Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to measure the influence of the Kids in Parks promotional program on the utilization of nature trails by children in an urban community.

Methods

- Pre-post design measured the utilization of 3 nature trails in Charlotte, NC.
- Fall 2014, 3 trails were identified for inclusion in the KIP program. Over a 1-month period research staff spent 300 hours observing and documenting the use of these trails.
- Information collected included the number of adults and children that used the trails and the demographic characteristics of the children such as age and minority status.
- Nine months later, the 3 trails were officially promoted to the public as KIP trails – this included a ‘grand opening’ event, promotion on the KIP website, and the implementation of KIP trailheads and informational brochures.
- Fall of 2015, the 3 trails were observed again. The change in the number of children observed pre and post intervention using Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test.

Results			
Mean Children per 4 hour Observation Session	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention	P
Overall	0.6	0.8	0.004
By Age			
0-5 years	0.16	0.19	0.51
5-12 years	0.35	0.44	0.015
13-18 years	0.03	0.10	0.002
Non-White	0.10	0.18	0.02

Sample Characteristics

In fall 2014, 25% of the trail users were children. The mean age was 6.9 years and 12% of the children were non-white. After the implementation of KIP signs, in fall 2015, 32% of trail users were children. The mean age was 7.4 years and 16% of the children were non-white.

Results

Children’s use of the nature trails was low, averaging less than one child per 4-hour observation period. The number of children using the KIP trails increased from fall 2014 and fall 2015. The increase was the most pronounced among older children and adolescents. There was also a significant increase in the use of trails by non-white children post intervention.

Conclusion

The increase in trail use by children was likely due to the KIP intervention and the related marketing however more research is necessary to adequately assess the impact of KIP. The KIP intervention is currently underway in 7 states and Washington, DC at 130 trails. Other communities are encouraged to implement KIP as a strategy to engage children in the outdoor physical activity.

Funding Source

Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation

For more information contact: efracine@uncc.edu

