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Active breaks for health promotion in the classroom: the experience of I.C. “Abba Alighieri”

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Background. Physical activity represents one of the main determinants of health and contributes significantly to the psychophysical well-being of the individual. Data from the "OKKIO alla Salute" surveillance system highlight a high prevalence of excess weight among Sicilian children, which is also associated with the prolonged use of smartphones and devices. Active breaks are an educational strategy designed to reduce sedentary behavior and promote psychophysical and relational well-being, thereby improving health, cognitive development, attention, and learning. This initiative is part of the Predefined Program 01 "Schools Promoting Health" of the PAP (Predefined Business Plan) of the ASP of Palermo, aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles and strengthening the empowerment of teachers and families in the autonomous implementation of active breaks.

Materials And Methods. The project, carried out in co-design with three primary schools in Palermo, involved theoretical/practical meetings with teachers regarding active breaks, supported by experts in sports sciences, as well as the administration of pre- and post-intervention questionnaires to students, teachers, and parents. The activities were designed with careful attention to posture, safety, and the inclusion of children with disabilities. This study presents the preliminary data related to the questionnaires administered to the teachers of the I.C. Abba Alighieri.

Results. From a sample of 70 teachers (30 classes, 489 students), several critical issues emerge: 13% perceive that there is poor and partial collaboration between teachers and families. 17% believe that active breaks cannot bring benefits to children's learning, and that the students' autonomy in performing the exercises is poor and partial. 16% believe that teachers only partially stimulate students toward extracurricular interests and the discovery of their aptitudes.

Conclusions. Active breaks are short, playful-motor activities that counteract sedentary behavior at school. When integrated into teaching practices, they improve students' attention, learning, and well-being, while also contributing to a more positive and collaborative classroom climate.