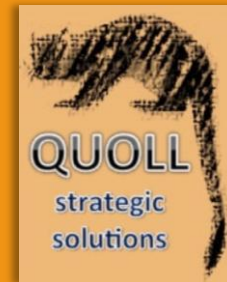


Active Movement Research Debrief



Qualitative Research Debrief
Group Discussions & Telephone Depths re. Old Schol House Nursery, Newmarket
December 2014/mike wade



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“

Active Movement is a good thing in these times of health crises. It's never too early to start building good habits for later in life.

”

old

parent of three year-

In a nutshell

The Sample

- One pre-research session with principals of The Old School Nursery, Stetchworth on Wednesday 10th December 2014
- One group discussion amongst eight nursery nurses held at The Old School Nursery, Stetchworth on Wednesday 10th December 2014
- Four telephone depth interviews conducted with parents of children attending the school during w/c 15th December 2014
- While it would have been inappropriate to interview the children directly, all interviews with nurses and parents were divided between the adults' own experiences and their observations of the children's experiences

Key elements from Topic Guide

- What did you think when you were first made aware of AM?
- What do you think after eight weeks of AM?
- Talk about difference and why
- Has it been worth it? Which elements seemed to have the most/least beneficial effect?
- Was it fun or a chore? Did it create any collective spirit or was it purely individual?
- How well did you stick to the regime? How hard to do that?
- How would you sum up the effect it has had?
- Are you looking forward to next phase? What hopes and expectations?
- Any extra-school issues, eg taking AM home, talking to others about it, etc
- Any changes or improvements to suggest?

An important note

- School principals, educationalists and the nursery nurses will inevitably be highly engaged with any new programme such as AM
- As a result they had a great deal to say about the overall effect and specific detail of the eight weeks they had experienced at the time of the research
- Parents have a far looser connection with the programme. To them AM is one of a number of tools the nursery school uses and so not necessarily their concern. This state of mind changes only when the programme enters their own home, at which point they become more involved
- To the children there is no such thing as Active Movement, only Stan and Sid
- NB All phrases shown in italics in this report are direct quotes from respondents

Pre- Active Movement programme

How respondents felt on first hearing about AM but before experiencing it

First impressions of Active Movement concept

- Both nurses and parents exhibited some degree of scepticism on first hearing of Active Movement (AM) and its claimed benefits, these seeming “too good to be true”
- The nurses quickly overcame their cynicism when presented with scientific fact by plausible presenters. They soon became advocates, while remaining a little concerned about what extra reporting workload might be required
- Only one of the interviewed parents had attended the briefing session. The newsletter released to overcome this shortfall arrived after launch, so for most the first experience of AM was the Stan and Sid (S&S) in-school material. Some were confused by this but were mostly relaxed due to their high level of trust in the school (which is known for incorporating new initiatives into its working methods)

Nurses' specific pre-programme concerns

- We're already busy - how will we fit all this in?
- How will we be able to make it work for the children?
- Will there be lots more records to be kept?
- How could it work with the little ones - especially babies?
- Me and my group are already active - would standing up really improve anything?
- Might it make them overactive? - sometimes they need to calm down
- Was it simply Linda exploring another of the progressive initiatives she enjoys?
- Will we have to spend ages explaining/justifying AM to parents who haven't taken the trouble to attend a briefing or read the newsletter?

Post phase one of Active Movement programme

Eight weeks in

Nurses on themselves: overall response to AM

- All eight nurses interviewed supported the AM programme:
- *I feel really positive about it. I'm quite active anyway but it reminded me that I could do more - like using stairs instead of using an escalator. The statistics made me aware of what extra you could do in what's really like your downtime*
- *The pedometer challenges made me realise that even though I'm active I could do more. It became quite competitive in the end - in a good team building way!*
- *It's been a good experience, in fact you sort of stop noticing because after a while it's not a big deal anymore: it becomes integrated in what you're doing anyway*
- *I saw one nurse who used to sit and rock the babies change in a week to mostly doing that standing up*
- *After a few weeks you just get on with it - it just makes sense*

Nurses on themselves: AM out of school

Several had incorporated AM processes into their non-school lives:

- *It made me realise that there were things I hadn't thought about - like how when I go to the gym I was parking as close as possible to the door! It just makes you start thinking that way about everything, about not being lazy*
- *I now take the dog for longer walks which is good for him and me, because I'm more conscious of the benefits of it*
- *I bake a lot in the evening and used to sit while doing it, now I stand, why not?*
- *When I set the cooking timer I no longer sit down - I find other things to do, to keep me active*

Nurses on themselves: involving others

One or two nurses had involved their friends and family:

- *It gets into your brain - you start even mentioning it to friends because you are thinking about it out of the nursery*
- *I was in London for the weekend and didn't use the escalators once - I even made the people with me do the same!*

But:

- *It's harder to convince people outside the workplace because everyone here knows about it and is doing it, whereas other people might take a lot of convincing*
- *You don't want to be 'preachy' with other people ("big headed teacher")*

Nurses on themselves: the benefits of AM

The nurses did not expect weight loss or fitness improvements, but had perceived benefits in their own well-being:

- *It isn't that you feel fitter or anything, it's more that you feel better in yourself for making an effort*
- *I think it makes you feel less guilty if you really can't get to the gym or do a jog one time*
- *It made me realise that it takes less time than you think to do these good things: walking to a further loo doesn't take much longer*
- *After a while it switches round and becomes automatic, so that instead of thinking about doing it you start to notice when you aren't and feel a bit guilty, which motivates you to do something more*

Nurses' biggest problem was parents

The biggest challenge was parents who hadn't understood AM and so were unconvinced by the "facts" (eg calories) and confused by Stan and Sid:

- *they see all the posters and wonder what's going on here, we don't know about this, feeling "we didn't sign up for this"*
- *the practices we are suggesting can make parent's lives a bit more difficult - a lot carry their kids about (upstairs to bed or from car to school) because it's quicker for them - so they need buy-in to AM to avoid anti feelings about what we are suggesting*
- *It's harder to pass AM on to parents as to some it appears to be an activity for kids that only the nurses need be involved with*

Nurses found most parents came round

Homework had a lot to do with this, as did the children's enthusiasm:

- *the homework concept was very good at getting parents more involved and better understanding what AM is about and how simple it is*
- *several of us have noticed some parents seem to be building in extra walking from car to school - that sort of thing is really good because you can tell which ones are going to be active later in life and which ones aren't, so you can target AM to try and help the more passive ones*
- *Some parents with older children recognise how soon the hunger for activity can wane in the face of computer games and facebook, so they are more responsive to teaching about activity now - although superficially it can make parents life easier if kids are quiet in their room and not outdoors needing to have an eye kept on them, especially if they work from home*

Nurses' views on continuing with AM

There was a clear desire to continue with the AM programme and find ways to improve it:

- *To keep it going is a definite because it's become embedded into everything we do - but we have to find easier ways of recording - incorporated in new ways of working (eg app/ipad)*
- *Music & singing story tapes with SFX and S&S's voices would be great opportunity areas to develop the relationship - the kids all love an action song*
- *We ideally need physical, tangible things - dolls would be ideal - even if it's just one the kids can take turns to take home and fill in an activity diary that the parents interact with*
- *In the future there must be room to integrate AM with diet and exercise programmes*
- *It needs more adaptation by age - eg the babies and the toddlers are different and so are their nurses' physical roles, so this needs taking into account*

Children's response to S&S

The children readily embraced S&S and saw what they stood for very quickly:

- *They picked it up really quickly, it didn't take lots of repetition or teaching them*
- *The kids took really well to the characters - happy to hold them in their imaginations (eg Stan not at his own birthday party) and project them ("they're brothers")*
- *They reference S&S even in non-related activities ("you're tall, you're like Stan")*
- *Even the young ones remember their names and understand them - one or two under-twos got it all despite only just being able to talk! And the others can find S & S - even with just the headshots and no clue of the chair to go by*
- *The older ones engage most - when they saw the poster about Stan having a good day they cheered him because they know he's nice*

Children's deeper understanding of AM

The children are sub-consciously seeing beyond S&S to the principles of AM:

- *It helps children understand that there's a time to stand up and be more active as well as a time to sit down, like at lunch time, which can otherwise be a problem with some of them who don't want to relax while they eat*
- *Amazingly the kids see a wider connection with health. When asked "how should we celebrate Stan's birthday", one child said "go running" while another said "we should eat fruit and veg" - even though we never told them those connections*
- *Before AM a lot of children would ask for a chair if there wasn't one by the table where they wanted to do something, but now the ones who have most taken to S&S are likely not to ask because they are happy standing to do it - "I'm Stan", they say*

Children's family involvement

Parents and nurses both support the view that the children enjoyed taking AM home, through specific homework activities and also simply passing on what they had learned to their less active parents:

- *The kids enjoy having homework - doing it, bringing it back and handing it in (nurse)*
- *He loved the birthday party and the card from S&S (parent A)*
- *He soon started to tell us about when we should be standing or walking! (parent B)*
- *The homework was very exciting for him - a source of pride because his older brother has homework and now he had it as well (parent C)*
- *We didn't know about the pedometer thing - it would have been great to have been able to have that at home over a weekend to play with (parent B)*

Parents' attitudes to AM

Parents' attitudes were positive (although agreement to be interviewed will always bias this). In general the older the child the greater the endorsement of the programme:

- *I liked the sound of AM from the start, we're quite an active family anyway. When I read up on it in the newsletter - couldn't get to the meeting as it was an evening - I must confess I was a little bit cynical: is standing up really capable of making that much of a change? However, the concept sounded worthwhile and I trust the school so I was fairly relaxed about it.*
- *It's definitely a good idea - want to see it keep going and grow. The children need it to become second nature - lots of reinforcement - because you never quite know what goes in and what sticks*

(parent of three year-old)

Parents' attitudes to AM

Even with two year-olds the message is getting through:

- *Two is a bit young to expect them to pick up too much or bring stuff home with them. However, my daughter has really taken to it and automatically relates standing and sitting with Stan and Sid, to the extent that when I'm getting her dressed or undressed and ask her to stand she will say "stand up Stan" and equally when I ask her to sit down she will say "sit down Sid". I was neutral at first but now I'm for it - it's important that they get a good start in life and while it's too early for them to worry themselves about what they eat or how much exercise they get - because they never stop - this is a good thing to begin with*
- *These sound like small things but they matter. It's fun learning that becomes routine. I think it's good that they have the programme and I'd like to see it continue...*

(parent of two year-

old)

Parents' attitudes to AM

By the age of four, parents' issues can change:

- *I went to the evening briefing so got quite excited about a pioneering approach that could only do the kids good. My one worry was whether I'd have loads of extra stuff to do at home to support it, but I didn't.*
- *He liked the homework because he gets easily bored: he did more than needed*
- *The only negative for me is a small one: he loves Stan so much that I can't always get him to sit down when I need him to. Maybe it should be "When you can, Stan". Oh, and one other thing is what happens when he goes to Primary school? If they don't do it there he will look daft standing up and then lose the will - and the reminders - to keep him doing it*

(parent of four year-old)

Parents' attitudes to AM development

Parents are willing to get more involved and look to see the programme develop:

- *He got more involved when there was greater participation - the homework was very exciting for him - he wanted to get on with it right away so we got dressed up warmly and took a torch and went out and did it then and there*
- *She hasn't had homework but it would be good fun - I'd love to have the pedometer for a while because we've often wondered how far she travels in a day!*
- *You want your children to be active but all the extra-school activities seem to happen at the same time - on Saturday mornings - so it's good that he can do something active while he's at school in the week*
- *He's already told me about Max the dog being the next thing*
- *I'm more than happy for the nursery to continue - I hope AM runs over into Primary*

Three Key Learnings

Bigger thoughts that arise from the findings

Key Learning 1

- Scientific evidence and the programme's scientific pedigree add vital credibility for obtaining buy-in from participants, some of whom may be initially inclined to feel it's all "too good to be true"
- This is especially true when practitioners have to convince others, such as parents, who have not read-up on the programme (most won't) and aren't convinced (many parents questioned the stair/calorie equation):
 - *"A lot of parents only first found out about Active Movement when they saw all the posters and then started asking lots of questions, which we had to try to answer"* (nurse)
- There perhaps needs to be a clearer demarcation between nurse and child programme reminders - perhaps colour coding - to avoid parents looking at signs on the stairs and wondering why their toddlers are being expected to walk up and down them

Key Learning 2

- To the kids it's all about S&S, not AM - but parents need to see it the other way round. A Sid and Stan book for adults could introduce them and AM, perhaps suggesting how adults can benefit, too - ideally with links to a web site
- Parents tend to look at nursery education as being about 'real-time' physical development - walking, talking, reading, co-ordination - rather than building long term behaviours like attitudes to exercise and health. They may need to be made more aware of the importance of adopting this longer view early on in their children's lives. Otherwise AM can seem a bit peripheral to "what the kids are at school for"
- Homework is the key to educating and convincing parents about AM, given both parents and children view such homework positively

Key Learning 3

- AM smoothes out the divide in life between being active and not being active, potentially creating a new zone of low level activity, where the Venn diagram bisects
- In that sense AM does make ‘dead’ time into ‘live’ time: a bridge between existing modes, meaning we can now reclassify standing as more than inactivity, whereas sitting still is. This way of explaining the programme could give it more appeal to parents and other adults
- For children, though, Sid must still have a role, as well as Stan. With young kids who can be over-active Sid shouldn’t be seen as the ‘bad’ response in all situations
 - *“In our class of young ones, it’s helped them understand the importance of having a rest, too”*

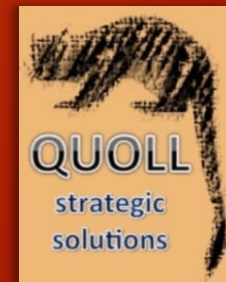
In conclusion

- The AM programme was enjoyed and considered beneficial by all levels of participants: the school, the nursery nurses, the parents and - from the way they have taken to it - the children, too
- The only criticisms relate to parent ignorance at launch (few attended the briefing session) and low-level concerns relating to the 'pilot' nature of the materials, meaning a developed set of stimulus is not yet available
- All concerned want to see the programme continue, but what about Primary?
- As with UCHL, the medical credibility of Dr Mike and the enthusiasm of Peter (echoed by the on-site team leader) were key to engagement and so ultimately to success. AM is only believable where those expounding it are trusted



Active Movement Research Debrief

Group Discussions in St Ignatius Primary School, Haringey
and Marks Gate Nursery, Dagenham
December 2016
24th December 2016/mike wade



“ Active Movement is simple yet effective. It has quickly become ingrained as part of school life. The children have taken to it so well they police it themselves! ”

In a nutshell

The Sample

- Four group discussions with teachers and nurses at two schools which recently adopted Active Movement (one term ago):
 - St Ignatius RC Primary School, Tottenham, Haringey
 - Marks Gate Nursery, Rose Lane, Romford, Essex
- Conducted in December 2016

- NB This is the first time that research has been conducted this early in the Active Movement programme. As a result respondent experiences were fresher which, while it might slightly influence findings positively, also increases their accuracy

Before the detailed research findings
here's the key issue to bear in mind

The Key issue

- This is the first research study undertaken in which *all* groups have been *wholly* positive about Active Movement
- Support for the scheme has been expressed universally and without negative comment on any major issues
- Any minor criticism has been constructive and about fine detail
- This has much to do with changes made by Active Movement in the nature of initial training offered, the nature of teacher collaboration permitted and lower levels of branding/imposition within school practices and premises

Thinking back to first impressions

- To start, respondents were asked to recall how they felt when they first heard about *Active Movement*, prior to attending briefing/training sessions
- The usual concerns were registered about the potential for increased complexity within the teaching regime and further unwelcome additions to an already considerable work load
- On the positive side, there were high levels of interest and intrigue

Verbatims - first response

- *It sounded interesting but I couldn't help thinking, Oh, no - this might mean more work for us all*
- *I thought, Ah, another scheme called Active Something - there are lots of others already so is this just another trendy new idea?*
- *A sports thing - how is that going to work with little ones?*
- *I felt a bit cautious, telling myself that we'll have to wait and see*
- *Sounded like it might be complicated - would we need special equipment? Would it fit in with how we do things already?*
- *Fitness, we could do with some of that - so it seemed exciting but likely to be more work. Still, I might lose some weight myself!*

How did that change following ‘training’?

- The new method of inculcating the programme put almost all the initial fears to rest
- Active Movement was seen as collaborative and sensitive to the particular needs of the particular school
- The anticipation it produced in staff was overwhelmingly positive with many becoming excited about the possibilities ahead
- The supporting medical evidence provided was important in overcoming most low-level cynicism
- Only a few teachers felt that there was too much to take in at once at the time of the session

Verbatims - post-training

- *It was much clearer now - I felt excited about how it could slot in to what we do already*
- *The facts were interesting - they reduced doubts I and some other people might otherwise have had*
- *Getting children healthier in baby steps is clever - standing up is such a small thing there was no need to be worried or cynical*
- *I could immediately see opportunities to get through to the kids who don't run around much - often the calmer characters or clingy ones who need bringing out - to do some activity rather than just sit*
- *It turns out to be a very simple thing that's quite easy to implement yet would make children aware of the importance of movement*

More verbatims - post-training

- *Maybe a bit of an overload of ideas - how am I going to do all of this? Initially, I thought maybe I just won't do it*
- *Perhaps it could have been prioritized better, showing that these are all options to pick from, with a few starter suggestions*
- *It's rather simple, but there are many manifestations, so I knew it would need clarifying*
- *To be honest, I was still a little cynical about some health claims*
- *Very simple - we need to concentrate on that first because getting complicated too quickly could confuse everyone concerned*
- *How can we pass it on to parents in order for them to understand?*

How have things developed, one term in?

- Very well
- The pupils have willingly adopted it and adapted it, finding it both fun and helpful in their learning
- The teachers have found it easy to integrate within their teaching methodologies
- Part of the key to this successful early adoption has been the increased flexibility in how Active Movement is incorporated into school life
- However, it is evident that some teachers are using it less than others. New initiatives added to the current regime would further reinforce compliance and increase enjoyment
- A new term is a perfect chance to achieve this

Verbatims - AM in action

- *Active Movement is simple yet effective. It has quickly become ingrained as part of school life. The children have taken to it so well they police it themselves!*
- *It will become more embedded next year when they find different teachers also do it, so it filters through that this is how we all do things, not just one class or year*
- *Just going along with it and using it where we can seems to work - especially in encouraging less confident children to participate*
- *With the younger ones, it's really good to have the characters, who are compelling symbols for what we want the children to do*
- *There has been no bad experience, so we should continue to come up with more ways of using AM, because it makes a difference*

More verbatims - AM in action

- *AM is good in projects where two or more pupils have worked on something together. Normally only one would report, so the others weren't recognized but now they all stand up, even when just one is presenting the work*
- *I've really only used it fairly basically - I could branch out and do more but I haven't got round to it, so I need to remember to develop it further. Some inspiration would be useful*
- *Bonding happens by standing to pray together or in meditation (which the children voted for themselves) but we could do more in groups or houses*
- *One of our values in this group is Fun. AM helps us teach important things in a fun way. Tiggy is important as well as Max - sitting down at certain times*
- *It's the dolls that make it work best of all: words and reasoning don't always get through to these young children but the characters do*

More verbatims - AM in action

- *It's about little ingredients that become part of the day and habit - the children enjoy it so much they want to take part*
- *It's already slotted in and become normal behaviour because it's a good programme with elements developed to suit us here*
- *The key is getting kids to think about health and do something about it in a simple way - with AM there are no big hurdles to overcome*
- *Keeping up energy levels and pace is really important - the dynamic of sitting/standing/moving is something that AM can bring to the classroom*
- *To me the improved learning is every bit as important as the healthiness - the two can link eg twelve steps we walk up are now linked to twelve times table!*
- *Standing up to read is really good as it gives them more confidence plus voice projection. It also focuses the other children, anchoring the point being illustrated and helping them remember it*

More verbatims - AM in action

- *The children absolutely love it: they really embrace AM, especially because of the Max & Tiggy toys, which they all want to take home*
- *AM sits well alongside our breathing excercises and also peps up 'circle time' so the children aren't sitting down too much - kids sitting down shut down, so AM shakes things up a bit*
- *It's brought a bit more discipline to some of the special needs children who find it more involving to respond to the characters than our commands!*
- *Early Years are important - learning about things like health is vital. That's why the Head was so excited about AM as it's a chance to form habits in the children that will last forever*
- *We could slot AM into our existing Home Learning programme easily - it wasn't hard for us, no extra work at all, in fact*

What about the staff themselves?

- The nursery school had opted to encourage the staff to participate in Active Movement alongside the children
- All interviewed seemed to have made some concessions towards compliance, some more vigorously than others
- One group of interviewees willingly stood for their whole 45 minute research session!
- Some had amended their travel routines, others permitted themselves less sitting time in breaks
- There was less involvement amongst staff at St Ignatius, who had not signed up to the programme

Verbatims - staff involvement

- *I've started to stand when I talk to people now - I used to seek out somewhere to sit down, which was a bit lazy!*
- *I stand to listen to the children where before I would maybe sit - it shows some respect for them and helps replace a "ping pong" conversation with a more desirable "basketball"-style participation*
- *The facts like it adding up to 10 miles over a year were really impressive, so it doesn't seem so crazy even for me to do*
- *I'm quite fit but Active Movement helps me keep going, with no drops in the day - because body muscles shut down after 20 minutes inaction, I have learned*
- *I stand on the bus and more often walk a bus stop further. We try to stand up for training but we do such a lot anyway we don't all succeed!*

What about the parents?

- Both schools are in deprived, multi-ethnic locations where English is often a second language within the children's families
- This can create difficulties for the school in engaging with parents and, in particular, eliciting their support in the children's education
- Some of the nursery parents were taking advantage of the government's scheme of three free hours a day, but this could lead to continuity problems between school learning and home practices. AM was seen as one thing that might assist here.
- Active Homework was particularly useful in these situations
- Staff would clearly welcome further parent initiatives from within the Active Movement programme

Verbatims - parents' responses

- *Active Homework was really helpful because we can have problems engaging parents. They needed to sign to show that the children had done it. Got great response, really good to get them aware of what we are doing at the school*
- *Some parents have started requesting the dolls at home and then building a little exercise routine around it. Others have sent in pictures of Max going for a walk, Max at the shops or Max at a birthday party*
- *Already we've seen some parents walking from cars with their children rather than using a buggy*
- *Some of the parents have said that it has made them more active because they are trying to incorporate a bit of AM into how the family spend time together*
- *It's great continuity for those funded children who are only here for three hours a day. Their parents, who we can't always easily get through to, can pick up on the characters and AM, so adding some valuable support from home*

Development potential for the future

- Most interviewees admitted that they could and should be beginning to extend the ways in which Active Movement was incorporated into their personal school teaching programmes, some with a tinge of guilt
- In some cases such an opportunity would be about using more of the options already made available, for which staff would be grateful for some impetus and inspiration
- In other cases staff already had ideas for fresh developments, ones that could be introduced in the future, with which they would appreciate assistance in evolution and formulation

Verbatims - AM development (existing concepts)

- *It's working because it's involving/fun but the children probably don't know as much as they might about the reasons why. The reception kids will carry it with them as they grow, but for the older ones, the assembly was a while ago and went over a lot of their heads. Might need more child-friendly learning scheme*
- *More workshops would perhaps help, say with Year 6 and then get them to lead the younger children - both parties like that sort of thing*
- *How do we get more engagement with parents? The briefing for them was a bit highbrow, especially as many don't have very good English - so a simpler presentation and home fact pack would be good*
- *It would be helpful to have a better information exchange amongst our teachers, so we can both be reminded and get inspiration to try more things that have been tested by others. Perhaps we could make time in staff meetings for sharing our learnings. Maybe even cross-fertilization between schools, indexed by goals - eg better order, learning the basics, team bonding, confidence growth*

Verbatims - AM development (new thoughts)

- *It's good to get the children to come up with their own ideas and inputs*
- *We could benefit from developing AM more within lesson structure - eg learning times tables, punctuation - stand up briefly when you write a full stop - or for key words and sticky words in reading. Even walking while reading - it's fun and helps the learning go in*
- *Inter house activity has been good -but I'm sure we could develop that more. More goals for classes or houses to achieve?*
- *Homework that involves the parents more than just signing - for some cheat!*
- *In Nursery we could do with more of the Why of how some things are better for you - eg what eating more veg can do for you, alongside the movement - some proven facts for us and guidelines for parents.*
- *Music and songs about AM would be good, because the children will respond and love learning the words*

Final conclusions

- *“AM’s not a big thing. It’s easy to weave into our programme - but we could be doing more than we are. It should definitely be continued and further developed”*
- Most staff initially expected Active Movement to be more active, more complex and harder to implement than it proved to be. This conundrum actually works in AM’s favour: raising upfront interest before reassuring during training
- The lower key approach to signage and reduced didacticism, within overall compulsory involvement, have worked well, but best practice may need to be further topped up over time in order to maintain interest and inspiration
- Involving pupils in the schemes implementation has worked well and is vital for its future embedding
- Given the levels of goodwill towards the scheme from both staff and pupils these steps should not prove difficult

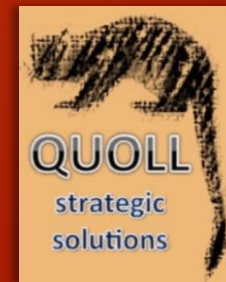


Active Movement Research Debrief

Group Discussions with All Saints CVAP, Pot Kiln Primary and
Newmarket Academy (Secondary)

July 2017

20th July 2017/mike wade



The Sample

- Three group discussions with teachers at three schools that recently adopted Active Movement (approx. one term ago):
- Pot Kiln School, Great Cornard, Sudbury
- Newmarket Academy, Exning Road, Newmarket
- All Saints CEVA Primary, Vicarage Road, Newmarket
- Research conducted on 3rd (Sudbury) and 5th (Newmarket) July 2017

“ I’m leaving this school shortly. If my next school doesn’t have Active Movement, I will personally persuade them to take it up... ”

In a nutshell

Key observations

General observations

- This is the second consecutive research study undertaken in which *all* groups have been *wholly* positive about Active Movement. On this occasion endorsement has been even stronger than before
- Support for the scheme has been expressed universally and without negative comment on major issues. Any minor criticism has been constructive and about fine detail
- This is a result of the continual evolutionary development of Active Movement, most importantly increased levels of teacher collaboration and school customisation, plus a growing awareness amongst participants that, rather than potentially being a classroom disruption, Active Movement is capable of becoming a powerful teaching aid

Specific observations

The issues discussed by teachers were mostly about how the schools should and could use Active Movement more widely, or more consistently, or where some teachers remained unconvinced, rather than about any system shortcomings

From Active Movement, the key desire was for more inspiration, cross-fertilisation and, if possible, more pre-prepared programmes (eg AM in Algebra!)

All three schools knew that their programme required a re-boot due to the difficult launch timing but all appeared committed to maintaining the Active Movement programme, having recognised the benefits it brings

There was agreement across all three schools that boys, who tend more to have “ants in their pants” benefit most from the ‘relief’ AM can bring to a class

Main Findings

Thinking back to first impressions

- To start, respondents were asked to recall how they felt when they first heard about Active Movement, prior to attending briefing/training sessions
- The usual concerns were registered about the potential for increased complexity within the teaching regime and further unwelcome additions to an already considerable work load
- On the positive side, there were high levels of interest and expectation

Verbatims - first response

- *Oh Gosh, here we go again: here's something else, another thing to do*
- *I thought it would be some sort of PE-linked idea, purely to promote further exercise*
- *I thought it was a healthy living initiative, related to fitness and diet*
- *We all thought, Ah, another thing to do - which we don't always welcome as we already have a lot to do*
- *I was sceptical at first - it might be disruptive and eat into lesson time*
- *I was interested in how it might work, especially as we've only just got to the point of getting them to sit still!*

How did that change following the briefing ?

- Active Movement was seen as being easier to implement and more collaborative and sensitive to the particular needs of the school than expected
- The supporting medical evidence provided was important in overcoming any doubts about the practical value of the programme
- The expectation amongst staff was positive, with many expressing interest in the broader possibilities it offered: in particular there was more interest than seen before in Active Movement's potential as a teaching aid, alongside its well-being benefits

Verbatims - post-training

- *Movement used to be a big part of our lives when we were children growing up, we were always running around in the park and playground, but today they have their own computers, games consoles and phones and they just don't get the exercise they should, especially if they aren't sporty. I saw Active Movement as something that might be able to help us there*
- *We already do a lot of movement in this school because we know exercise can be hard for some of our kids, so I think we did a sort of Active Movement already but in a different, less systematised way. I hoped that this new programme could give us a better reason to do it and a way of remembering to do it*

More verbatims - post-training

- *I thought it was worth giving it a proper go because it's true that we sort of put the brakes on the children's activities as they move up the school*
- *A bit of a relief to feel, Great, it isn't going to be the nightmare I feared it might be*
- *I saw the benefits in it as soon as I was properly made aware of it, particularly as some parents had expressed concern about a healthy schools report that had come out shortly before. We'd already been taking steps on healthier eating so this fitted in as another string to the bow*
- *Its likely benefits justified the investment in staff time because it seemed like a reasonably simple way to get the children up and moving more*

Timing has been an issue for all three schools

- *The timing wasn't perfect. Ideally it would have been in place from the beginning of the school year. Where it came in it hit the exam time which takes up everyone's attention*
- *We need to hit it again in September and give it a reboot. We have been a bit hampered by the late start and things like the movement around schools for exams. There's no point in doing anything now as the term is ending but we will give it a big push in September*
- *I'm sure if we keep going it will become second nature. We didn't start the year with it and it will make a difference when we do. Also for most children it will be a second academic year with Active Movement and so they will begin to see it as part of how they learn at this school*

Active Movement in action

Verbatims in this section have been assigned to individual schools

Overview on how is Active Movement working

- Most pupils have embraced Active Movement, finding it both fun and helpful in their learning - it is becoming automatic for many
- Teachers have found it fairly easy to integrate within their teaching methodologies but can still forget to explore it as fully as they might
- Some teachers are using it less than others but it is thought they may come round as the programme matures and develops
- The new term is firmly seen by all schools as an opportunity to reboot the programme and further embed it into school practices
- No schools expressed a desire to do anything other than continue

Verbatims - AM in action - Pot Kiln

- *The children think it's quite normal now. We sort of slipped it under the radar without too big a fanfare, so it just slotted in. It's the repetition of putting the word Active in front of things, without making a big fuss about it, and the low-key signage in the right places, that lets it become automatic, part of the daily vocabulary*
- *I find that Active Movement works particularly well with those of my boys who are gamers. They focus far better when they are up and about, actively participating in the process*

More verbatims - AM in action - Pot Kiln

- *Something that's worked really well is taking a process that would have been done in a text book and chopping it up, hiding it around the class and getting them to find the material, which gets them up and makes them active. They love it*
- *If I want them to draw shapes in order to get them to better understand them, it's quite dull. But if I make it an Active session and ask them to go out into the playground to chalk them there, then it becomes fun. It was such a successful lesson. Plus the shapes stayed chalked there when they went out to break so they were also doing some unwitting revision!*

More verbatims - AM in action - Pot Kiln

- *I've used Active Movement to teach paragraphing, which is never easy. I got them to stand and sit for alternative paragraphs and they picked up on it surprisingly quickly. Storytelling with actions! We probably use it more often than we realise, actually*
- *In my class I have some boys who have ants in their pants! They act younger than their age. But if I tell them that there are a series of angles hidden around the class room and their job is to find them and work out which one is missing, they are immediately focussed and off to do it like a shot. Whereas if I got them to do it in a text book, they'd be making noises and mucking about in minutes*

More verbatims - AM in action - Pot Kiln

- *I teach the older children. I've been here a long time and seen a lot of things come and go. I'll be honest, I thought here we go: another thing that's not going to last very long. I was a bit resistant towards it. But when I found out more, I began to realise it was a lot easier than I had feared. So it became a question of how can I best tailor it to my classroom, how can it best help my class? Once I'd given it a go, I changed around. Now I'm very pro Active Movement*

Verbatims - AM in action

Newmarket Academy

- *I hear the students talking about it a lot. Fairly casually, sometimes a bit tongue in cheek, but this morning one lad in science automatically stood to talk about what he had been doing, and some other boys commented it was Active Movement, so it's beginning to filter in*
- *From my observation, it must be working because I don't get a lot of moans and groans or questioning about it from the pupils. It's become an accepted way of things, although we are still driving it. Where the teachers have got behind it there is more traction, where the teacher has not there is less*
- *The pupils all know about it - they even quote the posters back at me sometimes, albeit with some sarcasm! That doesn't matter because it means the message has got home and they know it*

More verbatims - AM in action

Newmarket Academy

- *It's only been in place for three months, so I think it has yet to deliver all its benefits in a consistent manner. Different teachers run with different parts of it, some just pay it lip service, some started well but have faltered because it's been a busy time. Having said that, I was pleasantly surprised at the number of teachers who were prepared to give it a go and chip in with ideas*
- *Some teachers are, for want of a better term, stuck in their ways and feel that they already know what works for them. It's very difficult to change that other than making whole school policy in some areas. For example we don't use hand's up in this school - questions are always directed to an individual. In theory we could add on a requirement that the answering pupil stands up to respond, throughout the school. Perhaps we should*

More verbatims - AM in action

Newmarket Academy

- *Although it might look as if by allowing pupils to stand and move about one is ceding a level of control, in reality Active Movement can be a tool for exercising control in a subtle way, one that the children don't spot*
- *Personally, from my point of view the boys have bought into it a lot more than the girls have. On the other hand, that is good because it's really helped me with some of my more challenging boys as they know they won't have to sit down forever.*
- *The older girls probably find it a bit uncool, but then it's been sort of foisted upon them all of a sudden after years here without it*

Verbatims - AM in action - All Saints

- *It's good for making you examine other things, elements of everyday teaching that are done sitting down, and realise that you could make them more active and also more interesting*
- *Four months in, the results vary a lot. Some classes are completely with the programme - my class now always stand to answer questions, for example - while other classes haven't got embedded in the same way. You can see this at school assembly in the way that different classes behave*
- *When it's groups they remind each other but they can tend to forget when left alone. Mind you, I forget, too - it's not really deep inside my head yet. That will take time but we'll get there*

More verbatims - AM in action - All Saints

- *It works differently in different classes. In one sense quite literally, as it's sometimes hard to implement in small classrooms with lots of tables and chairs in them!*
- *The older children are a bit less keen to partake than the younger ones, for whom it is still a bit of fun. And they forget more easily. The eight year-old girls are very good at keeping it up, they are keen to please more. Whereas some of the special needs children need a long time to physically get up, but it's good for them*
- *I worried that very shy children would dislike having attention drawn to them and make them more recessive but it hasn't happened like that*

What about school staff and parents?

- Parents have not been interviewed at this stage
- Several of the teachers interviewed were connected with Physical Education and so didn't consider that they much needed Active Movement. However, some teachers had personally adopted some of what they had learned:
- *Active Movement has had an effect on me, too, outside school, in how I relate to sitting and standing. If I'm marking at home I make sure I don't do it all sitting*
- *For me, it's also about participation. If I'm asking them to stand up, I'll be standing up as well*
- *I walked home last night because of what I have absorbed about the science behind Active Movement*

Moving Active Movement forwards

Each school knows it needs a re-boot

- *To an extent the impetus has gone. Teachers have implemented it but stopped further expanding it, because it's working for them as it is. It's perfectly understandable but we really ought to develop it further because it's been working for us and could do still more (PK)*
- *While it isn't yet fully embedded in the school, it's been a really good start. If we pick it up again in September it will begin to become second nature: the messages are slowly but surely sinking in, action will follow (NA)*
- *It will help when we get new teachers in as they will have no knowledge of our teaching regime being anything other than one that includes Active Movement. They will be expecting to do new things (AS)*

Development potential for the future

- Most interviewees admitted that they could and should be beginning to extend the ways in which Active Movement was incorporated into their personal teaching programmes, some with a tinge of guilt
- In most cases the opportunity would be to use more of the options already made available, for which staff would be grateful for additional impetus and inspiration
- In other cases staff already had ideas for fresh developments, ones that could be introduced in the future, with which they would appreciate assistance in evolution and formulation

AM development thoughts - Pot Kiln

- *There's so much going on I don't have time to sit back and think how I'm going to ramp up my use of Active Movement, even though I'm a supporter of it. We just need a little nudge and some example to inspire us every now and then. A customising workshop would be great*
- *I'd love them to work with teachers and the curriculum to establish for each year group how we could make, for example, algebra, or long multiplication, more Active - properly, not just saying "stand up to do it"*

AM development thoughts - Newmarket Academy

- *The aim is to see if we can establish effects on learning, through improved concentration, using control groups. Hard to do but if we can manage to show it helps students achieve in exams then other teachers will be far more likely to take it up*
- *It's going to be interesting in September when we get a portion of our new students from a feeder school that has also been involved in the programme. We will have a chance to see how they compare to those arriving from non-AM schools. But in both instances we will, for the first time, have an intake who will see AM as simply part of the routine round here*

AM development thoughts - All Saints

- *Everyone is overloaded so it had to be something that wouldn't take up additional time and that is how Active Movement was presented to us. So I thought why not, let's give it a go.
Now we need to find a way to better integrate some of the activities we have had to relegate to homework.
I think that the movement side is fine but for me the characters and dolls can be a complication, especially when you don't have the curriculum time to explain it all and have to use homework to hopefully cover it off.
Homework is difficult because we have used it to get surveys done, which the parents have to sign off but you never know if they have even looked at it.
So we need to get to grips with that*

Final conclusions

- Many staff initially expected Active Movement to be more active, more complex and harder to implement than it proved to be in practice. However, some staff have still not really adopted it and this needed addressing
- In all three schools, teachers had accepted the physical health benefit of Active Movement and also begun to value its potential as a teaching tool, particularly in making learning more fun and helping manage unruly boys
- Newmarket Academy, in particular, was interested in its further potential in academic attainment terms, such as improving concentration levels
- Teachers would like more inspiration and helpful nudges while involving pupils in implementation always works well and can be key to embedding