



The Impact of Movement Breaks for Students from Teacher Experiences in Elementary Classrooms

Abby Foust, OTD; Deek Cunningham, PhD, OTR/L, SIPT (#2623), FAOTA

Sandra Groger, OTD, OTR/L | Limestone County Schools

Department of Occupational Therapy | University of Alabama at Birmingham

Introduction

Increased Academic Standards



Limited Movement for Students



Sensory Dysregulation



Distracting Behaviors



Teacher Frustration and Burnout

Purpose: to implement a program that examines the impact of movement breaks in elementary classrooms from a sensory perspective.

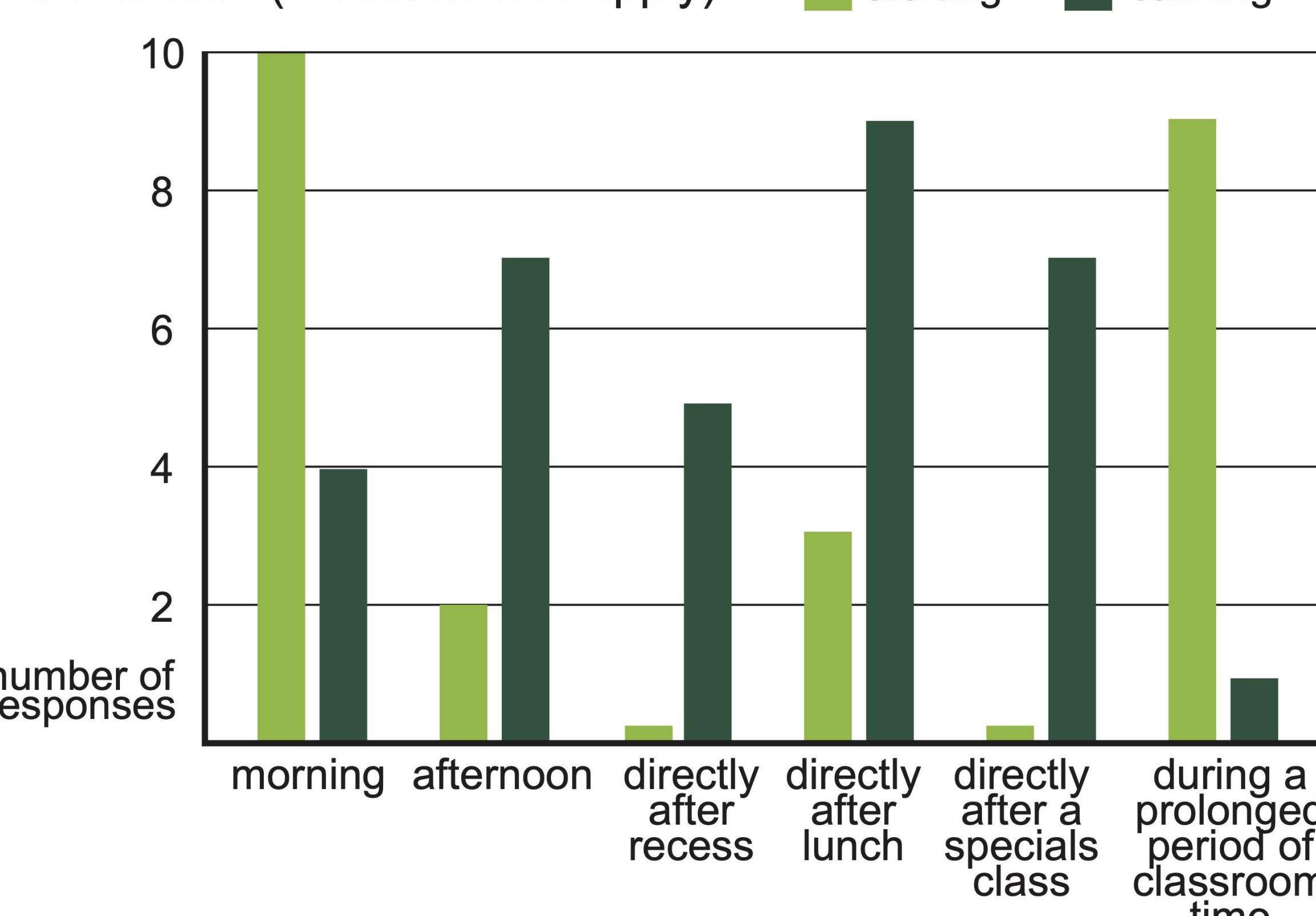
Aim: to enhance the experience of the educator and their students with the consultation of the school's occupational therapist.

Methods

- Teachers attended an educational session on appropriate use of calming and alerting movement breaks.
- Teachers utilized movement break videos created by the researcher for a six-week time frame.
- Teachers completed a weekly mixed-methods survey on their experiences with the movement breaks and their perception of students' abilities to perform classroom activities.

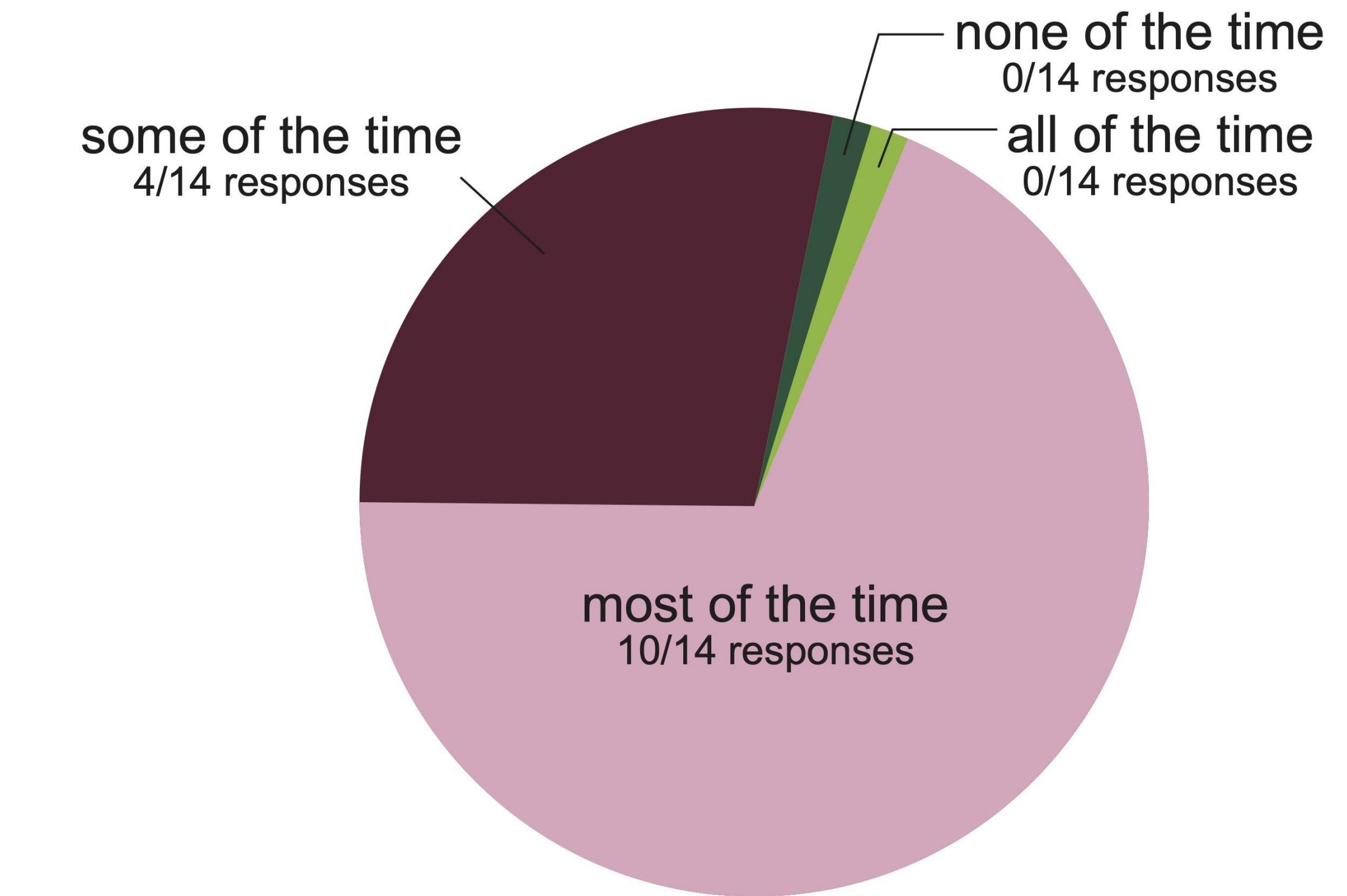
When movement breaks were used

Teachers' responses to the question "At what times of day did you use an ALERTING or CALMING movement break this week? (Select all that apply)"



Effectiveness of movement breaks

Teachers' responses to the question "Were students better able to attend to school-related tasks (i.e. following directions, focusing on individual work, fewer outbursts and distractions, less fidgeting, etc.) directly following a movement break this week?"



- When teachers were asked if the movement breaks assisted them in effective classroom management, teachers responded "most of the time" in 9/14 responses and "some of the time" in 5/14 responses.
- Teachers reported they recognized signs of sensory dysregulation in 100% of the responses.
- Teachers reported they could easily access the movement breaks videos in 13/14 responses.

Discussion

- Limitations include: 1) The researcher was not in the classroom to ensure movement breaks were being used effectively and to model movements. 2) Not all teachers responded to every weekly survey. 3) The study included a small sample size, so results cannot be generalized to a larger population.
- Since the movement break videos are online and freely accessible, any teacher can access them beyond this program and research study. (Click QR code below.)

Conclusion

- Because students display signs of sensory dysregulation at school, and because sensory-based movement breaks contribute to improved classroom behavior such as lengthened attention spans, less frequent class distractions, and increased ability to attend to individual tasks, OT practitioners should promote sensory models, including movement breaks, in the school system for an improved experience for teachers and students.
- Further research is needed regarding this topic.

