Improving Participation in Physical Education for Children with Disabilities

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 Improving Participation in Physical Education for Children with Disabilities
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BACKGROUND

• It is within the occupational therapy (OT) scope of practice to promote health, well-being, and participation in meaningful activities for all individuals (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2021).
• There are many benefits associated with participation in adaptive sports including improvements in mood and self-efficacy, memory and attention, muscle strength, motor coordination, and overall well-being and quality of life (Carbone et al., 2021; Diaz et al., 2019).
• Existing literature has explored the barriers that exist within community setting adaptive sports which include lack of knowledge of opportunities, lack of transportation, and time commitments (Blauwet et al., 2017; Diaz et al., 2019).
• This capstone project focused on addressing existing barriers including lack of trained personnel and expert providers in adaptive recreation (Carbone et al., 2021; Tow et al., 2020).
• OT further explored the false belief that sports rules are too difficult for CWD to learn and that accommodations cannot be made for this population (Carbone et al., 2021).

PROBLEM

There is currently a lack of understanding of the needs of CWD and the barriers that exist within schools which limit their participation in physical activities and sports. Many individuals with disabilities are not meeting the recommended minutes for daily physical activity which can impact CWD in many ways (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2022).

PURPOSE

• The purpose of this capstone project was to develop a better understanding of the needs of CWD who are interested in participating in physical activities and sports within schools but are limited by existing barriers.
• This project aimed to demonstrate that sports rules can be learned, and accommodations can be made for CWD to improve participation in physical activities and sports (Carbone et al., 2021).
• The intent of this project was to also develop a better understanding of the role of OT in Physical Education (PE), physical activities, and sports within schools.

METHODS

Observed PE programming and how CWD participate in PE, physical activities, and sports with their peers to further explore barriers within these occupations

Completed activity analyses for sports including basketball, soccer, and volleyball

Provided education and recommendations on general and sport-related accommodations to improve participation in physical activities and sports within schools

RESULTS

• Initially the intent of this capstone project was to further explore barriers in sports within schools; however, it was found that elementary school PE focuses on students learning foundational skills through various activities.
• This project made the shift to focus on more general educational information and recommendations for accommodations and modifications, while still incorporating some sport-related recommendations to support PE activities being more inclusive for CWD.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

• Existing literature has demonstrated that many of barriers that exist and impact participation in physical activities and sports for CWD are linked to external (environmental) factors.
• Literature has indicated that individuals with disabilities are more likely to sustain participation in activities when travel time and cost of transportation is decreased (Blauwet et al., 2017).
• By eliminating existing external factors, this capstone project focused on exploring the barriers that exist within the daily environment of school.
• With an OT lens, structured observations, activity analyses, and implementing cues, accommodations, and modifications as needed, it was demonstrated that sports rules are not too difficult for CWD to learn, and accommodations can be made for this population.
• Opportunities for CWD to participate in physical activities and sports within schools was achieved, which supported improvement in overall participation and performance in these occupations.

THEORETICAL MODEL

This capstone project was guided by the Person-Environment-Occupation-Performance (PEOP) model (Baum & Christiansen, 2005).

There is no involvement of human subjects and does not require an IRB approval.

REFERENCES


Implications for OT in Future

• Guidelines of OT services in schools focuses on conducting evaluations of how the child is performing in their occupations and using that information to provide service recommendations and creating an evidence-based individualized intervention plan that is implemented through an individualized education plan (AOTA, 2017).
• Through collaboration with other professionals, including PE teachers and aides who work with CWD, the role of OT in physical activities and sports within schools was able to be further explored and understood.

Deliverables

• Educational products:
  • Power point presentation
  • Handouts

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