

Benefits and Attitudes of Students toward Inclusive Instruction  
and Small Group Pullout Instruction

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Author Note

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### Abstract

Benefits of inclusion physical education class and small group pullout classes to provide the special (adapted) physical education service will be explored. Exploration to determine if one method of service and delivery is more powerful in ensuring the highest level of learning to occur in physical education for all students. Student attitudes will be compared and contrasted between both settings, and the general education students' attitudes will also be examined. Current data supports a more inclusive physical education class for all students. The data already in existence focuses mainly on attitude in an inclusion class, but minimal psychomotor assessment data is evaluated. This paper proposes to look at not only student attitudes and perspectives on the class, but also their assessment scores to determine if one method of service and delivery is more beneficial than another.

*Key words:* special (adapted) physical education service, pullout group, general physical education, inclusion, service and delivery, attitudes, performance level

### Introduction

When providing the special (adapted) physical education service to eligible students, there are several service and delivery formats that can be done to meet the needs of each individual student. Many students receive the special (adapted) physical education service through small group pullouts, but many schools are trying to adapt and modify educational instruction and services to be provided in a more inclusive setting. When examining the two types of instructional settings, inclusive or small group pullout, the benefits and attitudes of all of the students need to be explored. Specifically, exploration of an inclusive physical education class, where special education students receive their services in a general physical education class should be examined. In an educational shift of making lessons more inclusive, is an inclusive physical education setting more ideal for all students, including special education students with varying levels of ability.

Through observation and communication with students, the attitudes of students in an inclusive physical education class can be examined. Students will be asked to express their feelings towards the format of instruction, the inclusivity and interactions of the peers in the class, both special education and mainstreamed. Psychomotor assessment data from small group pullout special (adapted) physical education classes will be compared and contrasted with students in an inclusion class. General education students will provide their feelings regarding the concept of an inclusion class, anonymously providing their feelings toward the special education students, as well as their feedback on how general education students perceived their physical education instruction and format.

All in all, the research study will set out to determine what the benefits are of an inclusive physical education class, where special (adapted) physical education student receives their

adapted physical education service with their mainstreamed peers. Could an inclusive physical education benefit both the special education students and general education student, or do one or both groups of students suffer in some way? Is it more beneficial for special education students to receive their special (adapted) physical education services outside of an inclusion class, within small group pullouts?

### Review of the Literature

Current literature suggests the movement towards an inclusive physical education class, where both general education and special education students are taught as one course, but the inclusive setting does have some pitfalls. Unfortunately, as the push towards an inclusive setting happens, much of the current data collected focuses more on the perspective of the teacher and the training teachers have received in order to attempt the provision of the adapted physical education service to eligible students (Coates & Vickerman, 2008). Other research has supported philosophical aspects of inclusion physical education, but many have articulated concepts of practicality and utility (Haegele & Sutherland, 2015), thus making a unified move towards inclusion difficult. The attitudes and perceptions from physical education teachers also have a strong impact on the inclusivity of a class; and when an attitude is negative towards creating accommodations and modifications for specific students, students may have a negative physical education experience (Haegele & Sutherland, 2015).

With teacher perceptions put aside, student perceptions of inclusion in physical education vary from negative, neutral and positive. The determining factor of student perceptions can be broken down to impact from: instruction, adaptations and modifications, and perception from peers and teachers. Students generally enjoy physical education, but when a student feels discriminated against, by peers or a teacher, the physical education experience is adversely

affected (Coates & Vickerman 2008). In physical education, bullying can happen when a student cannot keep up with the class as a whole, or is the one student to bring the team down. One student was quoted saying: “he claimed that his worst day of physical education was ‘the day the kids first started teasing me’” (Haegele & Sutherland, 2015). In the opposite situation, when a student feels equal to his or her peers, the experience is more positive. One student expressed, “When I was playing floor hockey, instead of goalie, he (peer) got me to be a defense man, and one thing I really liked about Jay is when he passed the puck to me” (as cited in Haegele & Sutherland, 2015). The student felt the equality being able to play a position where he was more likely to be able to help his team, rather than having pucks hit at him all the time. “Supportive interactions” as put by Haegele and Sutherland (2015), create a more positive environment where the general education student can take leadership rolls in helping the special education student receive passes. This in turn empowers the special education student as he or she feels accomplishment and equality.

Empowerment in physical education is extremely important as it helps boost the students’ self-esteem. In regards to building the confidence and self-esteem in students, empowerment is not always seen in winning or being the best. Hutzler, Fliess, Chacham, and Van den Auweele state, “empowerment will not take place if only winning occurs, because the individual has no need for it. Empowerment is initiated through conflict and perceived deficits rather than through sufficient or abundant success and self-actualization” (2002). No matter what the skill ability is of the student, all students need to be involved. One study looked at a baseball game where the special (adapted) physical education students, or students with disabilities, did not participate in batting until another peer in the class pointed it out to the teacher (James, Kellman & Lieberman, 2013). It is important that activities are not always planned to be the easiest, but are modified for

some extent of success to be reached. Winning is not always what empowers the students; the importance of having the proper extensions and refinements are made in activities, thus ensuring high engagement with the proper feelings of achievement to one's maximum ability level. When students feel as though the proper equipment is not being used for the ability levels and overall capability of the student, the students find frustration in game play. In Herold and Dandolo's study *Including Visually Impaired Students*; one student described the deflation of a 'jingle ball' "as 'rubbish', a clear indication that his enjoyment of the lesson was compromised" (2009). Having an instructor who can properly create extensions, refinements and modifications to game play does have an affect on the overall participation and feelings of all students involved.

In the current studies, most of the data is collected in Europe, which raises the question of whether or not the same results would be seen in a physical education class in America? Could the curriculum and methodologies of teaching physical education differ between two countries? Further research should be done to see explore benefits of inclusion physical education settings. When quality physical education is taught, with proper interactions between general education and special education students, all students benefit. The attitudes of students tend to be more positive, especially when mainstreamed peers take a leadership role of including their special education peers. The benefits of an inclusion physical education class need to be further explored. Do students exhibit higher assessment scores when included in an inclusion physical education class? Based on student attitudes, it would appear as though an inclusion class would help raise special (adapted) physical education students' assessments within physical education. Special (adapted) physical education students can use the role models of their peers in order to help practice skills and thus improve assessments. It would also appear as though, inclusion physical education students would benefit from the inclusion class, as they would need to

perform the skills in a slower, more broken-down fashion in order to help their special education peers. When students break the skills down more, their overall performance should improve because the skills are being executed in a more proper form.

### Methods

Students from Watertown, Massachusetts would participate in a study, exploring further benefits and attitudes of students in an inclusive physical education class and small group pullout. Currently, Watertown Middle School students receive their special (adapted) physical education services in a small pullout group, following the inclusion physical education curriculum. The small group pullout teaches the necessary skills to students to take with them to their inclusion physical education class. When students get to the high school, in Watertown, Massachusetts, the students are fully included and receive their special (adapted) physical education service within their physical education class. Students who receive the special (adapted) physical education would be involved in the study; diagnosis of the students range from: autism, intellectual disabilities, and physical impairments.

General research would be done through participant-observer data collection. The use of the students' fitness testing scores from each secondary grade (six through twelve) would be explored for potential improvements as the students become more involved in their high school inclusion classes. Cognitive assessments should also be reviewed for score improvements based on the teaching styles. All students, both inclusion and special (adapted) physical education students, would take part in a survey on how they felt the method of teaching was able to help them further their physical education skills. The survey would include questions regarding their feelings towards the peers in the classroom and overall thoughts regarding the teachings of the teacher. As previously hypothesized, the results of the student feedback on their feelings and

attitudes toward their peers and the overall teaching should be more positive in the inclusive setting than in the small group pullout instructional setting.

The overall study will be measuring student attitudes towards the inclusive setting and small group pullouts. Overall assessment scores will also be evaluated to measure student performance in each setting. Does one setting provide more instructional advantages for students and thus allow for higher assessment scores? Assessments administered between the groups of students will be marginally similar. Fitness testing scores that will be examined will allow for the same modifications to be used when throughout administration of pre and post assessments in both settings.

Steps taken to determine the overall attitudes and benefits will differ in no way than providing the common assessments given in a traditional Watertown physical education class. The assessments will be reviewed over the course of the school year. Special (adapted) physical education student assessments will be kept in student portfolios and reviewed for improvements between involvement in the inclusion classes and small group pullouts. Fitness testing data in Watertown has been compiled consistently for the last five years and will be reviewed to see if students show better results when they receive their services in the inclusion setting. At the end of the physical education semester, students will be provided a survey to determine their feelings toward the course setup and their overall involvement. Students at the high school inclusion class experience pullout services at the middle school and will be asked to describe their preference for receiving the curriculum; and students will be asked to provide a rationale for their choosing. Students at the middle school, receive their special (adapted) service as a small group pullout, but also receive additional, general physical education. At the middle school level, students will be asked if they could receive their special (adapted) physical education service while in the



general physical education class, if they feel like they could benefit more than receiving it as a preview in the small pullout groups.

In addition to the students required to receive the special (adapted) physical education service, general education students will be asked about their experience working with the special education students. The general education students will be asked about the overall experience of receiving a more broken down curriculum, into smaller steps to create a higher success rate. The general education students will also be asked about their opinion of being partnered with someone that may have lower skill abilities than themselves. Finally, general education students will be asked for their overall feedback on the class in regards to what they saw as things that worked or things that did not work. From their general feedback, general education students will provide their thoughts on potential changes they feel as though could help benefit all students in the inclusion physical education class.

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