



Position Paper

Integrating Handicapped Students into Physical Education

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Introduction

Physical education should be an integral part of all students' educational programs. Students with handicaps can benefit from physical education in the same way as do their classmates. Physical education can positively influence the development of individuals' motor skills, fitness, social skills, and self-concept. It can also foster a positive attitude toward physical activity. Students with a mobility handicap, sensory impairment, mental handicap, or physical awkwardness should have the opportunity to experience these benefits through participation in a well-planned and implemented physical education program that recognizes individual needs.

Position

An increasing number of students with diverse handicaps are being educated in the schools closest to their homes. It is the responsibility of the community school to meet the program needs of these students. The role of the physical education teacher is to help integrate handicapped students into the physical education program while also fostering acceptance. All handicapped students should receive a physical education program that:

1. is flexible in expectations, instructional techniques, and methods of evaluation;
2. provides needed support, respecting students' strengths and needs (for example, equipment adaptations, teacher aide or peer tutoring, activity modification);
3. is provided in the most integrated setting possible, recognizing that there might be a need for a continuum of services ranging from full integration to an individualized, adapted, physical education program.
4. as much as possible, seeks the same goals of the regular physical education program when integration is not appropriate;
5. moves toward maintaining students in, or re-introducing them to, the regular physical education program.

Rationale

The educational focus of the last few decades has resulted in an increasing trend toward integrating into the local school students with a wide diversity of handicapping conditions. The policy of placing student with special needs into segregated educational programs is no longer considered appropriate (McClenaghan, 1981). In a Canadian survey recently completed by Watkinson and Bentz (1985), it was reported that 34 percent of the responding schools

indicated that they had one student or more with a physical disability. This number is indeed larger if other handicapping conditions are included (visual impairment, hearing impairment, neurological disorder, physical awkwardness, mental handicap). The physical education needs of these students cannot be ignored.

The important role that physical and leisure time activities play in the lifestyle of students who are handicapped is becoming widely acknowledged and accepted. The school plays a significant role in encouraging handicapped students to be involved in physical activity. The physical education program offers the opportunity to experience the inherent pleasure of being active. It is this inherent quality that provides the intrinsic motivation to continue involvement in physical activity (Dickinson and Perkins, 1985).

The benefits of participation in physical education by handicapped students are:

1. skill development (Swenson-Pierce and Kohl, 1986);
2. physical fitness (Rarick, Widdop, and Broadhead, 1970);
3. socialization (Dickinson and Perkins, 1985);
4. positive attitude toward physical activity (Dickinson and Perkins, 1985; Auxter, 1981; Long, Burkett, Glasenapp, and Odenkirk, 1980);
5. self-confidence (Rich and Wuest, 1983);
6. development of positive attitudes by peers and teachers toward individuals who are handicapped (Steward, 1980; Clark, French, and Henderson, 1985; French and Henderson, 1984; Folio and Norman, 1981).

The majority of handicapped students can and should be integrated into the physical education program (McClenaghan, 1981). One of the key elements to successful integration in physical education appear to be the teacher's ability to form positive and accurate expectations about students' participation (Karper and Martinek, 1985). These expectations should be flexible and reflect students' ability level as well as the demands of the activity.

Students should receive a specially designed program only when the severity and nature of handicapping condition or the level of skill development is so lacking that the regular program does not adequately meet students' needs (Auxter, 1981). The goal of an adapted physical education program is to upgrade, where possible, students' skill levels so that students can be reintroduced into the regular physical education program.

Opportunities for successful participation are essential to skill learning, self-confidence building, and enjoyment (McClenaghan, 1981; Rich and Wuest, 1983). The physical education class should acknowledge individual differences and provide opportunities for success in a variety of activity settings. Due to the nature of some students' handicaps, experiences, self-confidence, or skills, it may be necessary to offer an alternative program to the regular physical

education class. It is important to recognize that there may need to be a range or continuum of physical education services available for some handicapped students (Klesius, 1981; McClenaghan, 1981; Watkinson and Bentz, 1985; Aufsesser, 1981). Placement along the continuum should be made on the basis of assessment information obtained in consultation with the physical education teacher, adapted physical education specialist, physiotherapist, and/or other available resource people.

Continuum of Adapted Education Services

Full-Time Regular Physical Education

Participation is in the regular physical education program, with no adaptations.

Regular Physical Education with Adaptations

Participation is in the regular physical education program, with adaptations that may include use of peer tutors; adaptations to equipment, activity, and/or environment; consultation with an adapted physical education specialist, physiotherapist, and/or physical education specialist; and/or teacher aide support.

Part-Time Regular Physical Education, Part-Time Adapted Physical Education

Participation is in the regular physical education program, with participation in an individualized adapted physical education program when appropriate. The adapted physical education component is outside the regular physical education program and is planned and implemented based on assessment information. The program objectives are reflected in students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Full-Time Adapted Physical Education

Participation is in an adapted physical education program that is outside the regular physical education program. The adapted physical education program should, as much as possible, pursue the same goals as does the regular physical education program, while meeting the individual needs of students. The program is planned and implemented based on the assessment information, and the program objectives are reflected in students' individual Education Plans. This program may require the support of peer tutors or teacher aides; adaptations to the equipment, activities, and environment; specialized equipment; specialized curriculum resources; and/or consultation with an adapted physical education specialist, special education teacher/consultant, physiotherapist and/or physical education specialist.

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