

# Title: Sport and Physical Activity for Individuals with Disabilities

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## Introduction

The purpose of this project was to shed light on the importance of sports and physical activity for people with disabilities. It is crucial that students with disabilities are exposed to as many sports and physical activities as possible so they can lead a healthy lifestyle. There are a few laws that are in place that schools are required to follow so students with disabilities have the same opportunities as students without disabilities. These laws are the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), the American Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. These laws provide inclusion in every Physical Education program throughout the country to make sure these students are not discriminated against simply because of their disability. Unfortunately, not every program is using inclusion properly. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), it is recommended for people with disabilities to get 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity exercise or 75 minutes of high intensity exercise. This is the same amount of activity someone without disabilities should be getting. The CDC also stated, on average 47% of people with disabilities get no physical activity at all and another 22% get some exercise but not nearly the recommended amount they should.

## Background Information

In some Physical Education programs throughout the United States students with disabilities do not get the same sports or physical activity opportunities as people without disabilities. This is often due to lack of planning, equipment, money, and incorrect modifications. This allows students without disabilities to have more experience and better skills with physical activities. This is stated in the article, Promoting the participation of children with disabilities in sports, recreation, and physical activities by Nancy A Murphy, Paul S Carbone. The results found that there are not enough schools utilizing inclusion in their PE programs. It is often that students with disabilities are either taken out of PE class or have minimal participation in the class. This is a major disadvantage for these students and leads to a sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy behaviors.

## Observation

Living a sedentary lifestyle has many different health risks. These risks are increased chance for heart disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. Also, there are a number of mental disorders that accompany this lifestyle. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 39% of population in the United States is Obese and has tripled since 1975. People with disabilities are 53% more likely to become obese than people without disabilities according to the CDC. So, it is imperative students with disabilities are exposed to as many physical activities as possible.

## Results

After reading multiple case-studies that discuss what kind of benefits have on all students, the studies proved that students who participated in physical activity or sports on a regular basis were healthier, had better motor skills, decreased their risk of physical diseases, improved self-esteem, and less anxiety and depression. I also looked at studies that discussed this same topic but the focus group was students with disabilities. All of the same results were found when these students participated regularly in Physical Education or an after-school disability sports program. An example of this was found in the article called, The Psychosocial Dynamics of Youth Disability Sport. "The data was collected by surveying the students with disabilities and asking them questions after the sport/activity was completed. This study found that an overwhelming amount of students had a higher self-image of themselves after the activity was completed. The study also found that this led to an overall increased physical performance. One more thing that was found in this study was students had made strong relationships with their peers by participating in these activities. There was a direct correlation between physical performance and higher self-image" I found similar findings in the article, Psychological Benefits of Sports for Disabled People by Y. Hutzler and M. Bar-Eli. "The study found it had positive impacts on "performance accomplishments and functional efficiency, perceived self-efficacy, self-concept and self-esteem, personality disorders, mood states and focus of control and activity level and social acceptance." These students who took advantage of disability sports programs were able to have an outlet to express themselves. They were also able to build relationships with other students who were similar to them. They developed better social skills and overall a better self-image of themselves simply by participating everyday in PE or a disability sports program.

## Discussion & Conclusions

In conclusion, there needs to be more opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in Physical Education and sports. It has gotten better over the years due to the laws that have been put in place but these students are still not being exposed to as many sports or physical activities as they should be. According to the article, Inclusion in Sport: Disability and Participation by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). They collected data on schools around the United States and found inclusion and how it helps individuals with disabilities have a higher self-efficacy, increased motor skills, increased cognitive skills, and better social skills. This data was collected by randomly surveying schools around the United States. This article states how every school around the world should implement inclusion in all levels of their education system because of the profound benefit it has on students, especially students who have a disability. Inclusion needs to be at the forefront of every PE teachers program so these students can be given the tools they need to lead a healthy lifestyle. We are doing them a major disservice by giving them little exposure to these activities. They need to be treated just like everyone else. It should be required that every PE teacher has the proper knowledge and equipment to accommodate all of his/her students.