



Examining the Inclusive Summer Camp Environment as an Opportunity for Developing Social and Self-Determination Skills of Youth with Disabilities



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INTRODUCTION

- Important developmental aspects in adolescence include the ability to acquire and cultivate friendships, proficiencies, healthy lifestyle habits, and an overall purpose and meaning in life.
- Inclusion provides each child an equal opportunity to develop in a normal and integrated environment¹.
- Participation in stimulating and intrinsically motivating recreation and leisure activities offers a central means for the growth of this development in children with and without disabilities².
- Self-determined students have higher quality of life, increased involvement in educational and decision making settings, and a greater number of positive life outcomes in adulthood³.
- Initiation and development of social skills has been shown to decrease disruptive behavior and limit the need for interventions among youth disposed to problematic interactions with others and deficits in social and behavioral skills⁴.

The social and self-determination skills of youth with disabilities were hypothesized to develop and improve as the youth became more actively involved and engaged with other children, daily activities, and the experiences of an inclusive summer day camp program.

CONCLUSIONS

- The frequency of participation and level of engagement for each study measure of the *Youth Participation and Engagement Scale* was positively correlated with the involvement of youth with disabilities in an inclusive summer camp program.
- The skills that showed the most improvement were interacting positively with other youth (#1), communicating/indicating a personal need (#8), and learning and practicing problem solving skills for themselves and others (#9).
- While the correlations did not show significant regression values, each measure indicated a positive growth of each skill.
- The small sample size ($N = 29$) and short duration of the study ($t = 4.31 \pm 1.47$ weeks) may have accounted for the lack of significant regression values.

MATERIALS & METHODS

- The sample was composed of 29 youth participants with various disabilities, aged 6-14.
- The frequency of participation and level of engagement for the above measures was recorded weekly over the participants' involvement in inclusive summer camp programs.
- The average length of enrollment in the summer camp programs was 4.31 ± 1.47 weeks.

MEASURE	FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPATION	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT
1. Interacting positively with other youth	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 4
2. Participating in active activities	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 4
3. Participating in leisure activities	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 4
4. Participating in groups with 10 or more campers	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 4
5. Participating in groups with less than 10 campers	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 4
6. Developing and enhancing a recreational skill that can be used outside of camp experience	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 4
7. Display of positive behavior to self and others	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 4
8. Communicating/indicating a personal need	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 4
9. Learning and practicing problem solving skills for themselves and others	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 4
10. Learning routines and expectations	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 4

Figure 1: Youth Participation and Engagement Study Scale Instrument

- This instrument was designed with reference to the style and measures displayed in the *Supports Intensity Scale*⁵ and the *Arc's Self-Determination Scale: Adolescent Version*⁶.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- The creation of the *Youth Participation and Engagement Scale* allowed for the quantification and analysis of the changes in social and self-determination skills.
- This scale has been planned to replace a previous evaluation form used by the Recreation Council of Greater St. Louis in summer camp programs of municipal parks and recreation departments in St. Louis, MO.
- The results of this study show the benefits of the inclusive and recreational setting for the development of all youth, but especially for those with disabilities.
- Inclusion techniques may be used as alternatives or supplements to traditional behavioral modification techniques, such as segregated special education departments in schools, for youth and adolescents with disabilities.

RESULTS



Figure 2: Mean Regression Values (with ± 1 SEM) of the Frequency and Engagement Measures

- The frequency of participation and level of engagement for each studied measure was positively correlated with the involvement in an inclusive summer camp program.

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