

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: SELF-EFFICACY OF STUDENTS—INSTRUCTORS IN AN ADAPTED DANCE PROGRAM

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**Objective:** Experiential learning (EL) within an adapted dance program may produce increased self-efficacy in instructing or working with different populations such as disabled or culturally diverse individuals. The purpose of this study was to examine responses in participation with an adapted physical activity (PA) dance program for young individuals with Down syndrome.

**Methods:** To explore the experience of the student-volunteers, self-efficacy surveys were conducted before and after the six-week dance program. Using a Likert scale, students scored their perceived self-efficacy in individual and team instruction of PA in a variety of populations such as urban settings, cardiac rehabilitation, children, and individuals with disabilities. Additionally, journal reflections were used to explore the question, "What did/does this experience mean to you?" Journal reflections were analyzed for themes and patterns using the guidelines for interpretative phenomenological analysis.

**Results:** Results indicated that self-efficacy increased in instructing PA to the population involved in the dance program. Significant increases ( $P < .005$ ) were also noted in one's perceived ability to team instruct cardiac rehabilitation, high school students, general population, and children; as well as one's perceived ability to individually instruct high-risk individuals, cardiac rehabilitation, and children. Qualitative data from journal reflections suggest the following themes: dancers taught student-volunteers life lessons, student-volunteers gained experience with different populations, student-volunteers gained teaching experience.

**Conclusion:** Students involved in an EL program working with adapted populations, self-efficacy may increase not only in working with individuals with disabilities but may also increase self-efficacy in working with other populations. Students' perception of the experience suggests that the EL experience within the dance program through structured activities is impactful to personal and professional growth. Findings suggest that further studies may be needed to indicate the minimal duration of an EL experience needed to improve self-efficacy. Overall, students' feelings toward the population suggest growth toward more civic-mindedness.