

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

TITLE: Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities In Sporting Activities: Sports for ALL

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DATE OF SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE: 07/28/2020

THE PROJECT HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE PROJECT COMMITTEE IN

PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities

In Sporting Activities:

Sports for ALL

By

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree

in

Special Education

California State University San Marcos

Summer, 2020

Abstract

It is widely accepted that inclusion in schools offers a wide variety of benefits for children with disabilities. This project seeks to push the boundaries of inclusion from the school day to after the bell. This project focuses on the participation and inclusionary practices of one particular extracurricular activity, sports. Sports offer a unique set of benefits for all children.

Unfortunately, there are barriers that children with disabilities and their families face when it comes to getting involved in sports. The purpose of this project is to address one of these barriers by providing an informational meeting/ presentation for parents/guardians and families to learn about sports and the many benefits to participation. Additionally, this presentation includes information about inclusive sports as well as a resource brochure to help these families find resources to get their children involved. This project attempts to create an opportunity to educate and empower families of children with disabilities about ways their children can be involved in inclusion and in their community after the school day is over.

Keywords: Children, Extracurricular Activity, Inclusion, Inclusive Sports, Mild-Extensive Support Needs, Parents/Guardians, Sports.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank my project chair Dr. Rebecca Brooks at CSUSM for all of her care and support throughout this entire writing process. I would also like to thank a mentor of mine, Crystal Waterman for her support, kindness, and encouragement throughout my time student teaching in her classroom and during this writing process. I want to thank God, my family, and my friends for their countless hours of love and support throughout my life. A special thanks to my soon to be husband for supporting me in many different ways throughout my educational journey. His love has helped me to get where I am today. To my momma, dad, and the rest of my huge loving family, thank you all for being there for me, for helping me through the good and bad, and for encouraging me to live out my dreams. To my friends that have helped me through school by caring for me, loving me, and for keeping me laughing when I felt like crying, thank you. You each mean the world to me. I truly believe that this project would not be possible without my loved ones. Thank you CSUSM, School of Education for giving me so many amazing memories, opportunities, learning experiences, and some of my best friends that I could ever have. I am beyond grateful for this educational journey, thank you all for everything.

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Chapter One

Peer interaction and socialization for children has an abundance of benefits. These benefits include social skills development, refining of a variety of skills, and relationship building. Unfortunately, for many children, inclusion and peer interaction appears to end when school is over. Children who are not involved in programs such as sports, clubs, after school organizations, etc. may be missing out on many valuable opportunities, for growth, interaction, skills development, friendship, and much more. Involvement and participation in such activities has proven to be beneficial for all children, especially those whom have disabilities. In the writing that follows, I will review the purpose of this project, the significance of this project, and a list of defined terms that will be essential in this project.

Purpose of the Project

This project was inspired by my experiences with my brother and with students that I have worked with throughout my schooling. I watched as my brother struggled to control his emotions and grief, and he was able to change his life by joining in team sports. Sports gave him an outlet to physically work through emotions and challenges that he was facing. He was also able to make lifelong friends on his team. I have also learned that this project may help children like those in my clinical practices that I have worked with. I have worked with children in elementary school with ranging levels of disabilities. I noticed that many of the children would have rich social interactions at school and that this would end after school ended. Many would go home and spend the rest of their day or weekends with family. One of my students joined a soccer league and it seemed to be great for them. This allowed them to be physically active and play with his peers. The student's teacher was able to see him play a game and she said that she could see changes in him at school, especially at recess he began to engage in more reciprocal

play. This made me reflect on whether or not these good things were coming from them taking part in soccer. I then began to wonder why only this student was taking part in such activities after school. It was my observations and wonderings that led me to researching and developing a project like this.

This project seeks to address the problem that there is a perceived gap in participation of sports-based activities for children with disabilities compared to their typically developing peers. Additionally, this project will seek to support children and their families in overcoming barriers to such participation. Often parent and family involvement is essential in making this participation in activities like sports happen for children. My thinking is that if parents, guardians and families are informed about the benefits of sports-based extracurricular activities, or if they may be unaware of resources to join, then they may show no interest in involving their children. Additionally, this project will be used to educate parents and families of elementary children with disabilities about the benefits to inclusionary practices, specifically in sports. This would involve sharing benefits of children of all levels and ranges of abilities participating in sports all together. This project also contains components that will serve parents by providing them with resources and organizational names to find places to get their children involved in extracurricular activities in the greater community.

I want this project, which includes a presentation and resource handout, to be utilized by a school or community members in order to educate parents, guardians and families and help to get children involved. My hope is that this project will make a difference and help children to have more opportunities to participate in meaningful activities with their peers. I want to help make a difference in the lives of children of all ability ranges by advocating for inclusionary

sport participation. I also want this project to inspire more meaningful community interaction as well as belonging for children with disabilities and their families.

Significance of Project

For this project, I have taken prior studies and literature into consideration. I have looked into the benefits of inclusionary practices and of participation in sports. Despite the rich benefits that come from participation in sports based extracurriculars, children with disabilities and their families face many barriers to making this participation possible. This project seeks to overcome one of the major barriers, which involves parents needing to be informed and know about resources for children to participate. My hope is that this project will be helpful for parents, guardians and families, as well as the individuals in the school community to be informed of the important benefits that come about when children participate in inclusion sports after school hours.

My goal is that this project will make a difference in education by improving the lives of individual students. Children receive great benefits from participation in the activities outlined in this project, many that can help to change their lives. One example of this is social skill development and refinement. If children are able to develop their social skills outside of school, it is hopeful that this will help them with their social interactions in school. I also would like for this project to inspire greater involvement in these activities to allow for children to explore their passions, improve and maintain mental and physical health, and build lasting relationships with other children and community members. Aside for educational changes, I hope that this project will also make changes in the communities in which it is implemented. This project can help in getting children with disabilities and their families more involved in their communities. This can also benefit the children and families of those without disabilities as well. They will be able to

have experiences and rich social interactions with a diverse population of children in their community. If this project is successful, the lives of children, their families, and their greater community will be touched and changed.

Definition of Terms

Adaptive Sports

These sports and activities are much like any other sport and often run parallel to traditional sports. These particular activities include modifications that make other sports more accessible for people who have disabilities (CHASA, 2020). In this project there are resources for adaptive sports/activities that can be found in the brochure.

Children with Disabilities

Any child with mild-extensive support needs. Typically, these children receive special education services within their schooling. This project includes discussions and resources for children with mild-extensive support needs.

Extracurricular Activity

These activities are those which are done outside of class time. These activities may include participation in the arts, athletics, clubs, personal commitments, and even employment opportunities (Barge, 2020). In this project, sports and athletics based extracurricular activities will be discussed.

Inclusion

Inclusion within a school is an approach that includes all students with and without disabilities in one classroom together (Hodge et al., 2009). In these placements, students are given the proper supports and accommodations needed (Hodge et al., 2009).

Inclusive Sports

Inclusion in extracurriculars and sports involves children of all ability levels coming together to participate together. This would involve all children being involved, not some being involved while others are on the sidelines (Unicef, 2017). In this project, inclusion and inclusive sports/activities refers to the practices of all children being involved in one activity, team, experience, etc. together.

Sports

Sports and athletic based activities are discussed frequently in this project. One of the major types of sports is team-based sports, this could involve playing on a sport team, a club team, or an intermural team that is outside of the school (Barge, 2020). Some examples of these team sports may be soccer, baseball, football, basketball, and many more. Aside from team sports, individual sports will also be included in this project. These sports involve athletes that compete on their own, this type of sport activity inspires self-reliance (CLCF Sports, 2020). Some examples of individual sports may include golf, karate, swimming, and much more. In some cases, these individual sports may also involve some team components, an example of this can be seen in gymnastics. Individuals compete in different areas, but overall team scores may also be used in competition (CLCF Sports, 2020). This project will involve sports and athletic organizations that are aimed at an elementary age level that take place throughout the United States.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This project will contain a presentation and brochure geared towards parents and guardians of children, within the elementary school age group of kindergarten to fifth grade, with special needs ranging from mild to severe disabilities. This will also include a script for someone to use to give this presentation in their school community. The information that will be provided will be centered around extracurricular activities and inclusion of students with disabilities with their peers in these activities. The information given will serve as a means to educate parents about the positive benefits of a child being involved in extracurricular activities as well as the benefits to be involved with their peers. Additionally, a brochure will be provided that will include resources to help parents and guardians find extracurricular activities that can best fit their child.

For the purposes of this project, extracurricular activities will be defined as organized, recreational style activities that children take part in after the given school hours and outside of the school. It is also important to consider that this project will be focused on extracurriculars that contain physical activity or sports as well as inclusionary practices. This project will help in promoting inclusive practices in extracurriculars and also help in supporting parents and guardians in finding resources and opportunities for their children to participate in extracurricular activities. Parents and guardians will be addressed due to their key role in their children's lives, as well as in an effort to build a solid foundation of support for children and their involvement in extracurricular activities. The following concepts in previous literature will be highlighted below, this includes extracurricular activities and their benefits, inclusionary practices and

benefits, barriers to participation, and parent involvement in participation of extracurricular activities.

Participation in Extracurricular Activities

It is widely accepted that extracurricular activities can benefit children (Badura, et al., 2015). There are countless benefits that come to fruition when a child participates in such activities. These activities not only allow a child to be involved in something more than just school, but also bring about skill development opportunities (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010). Studies have shown that these activities that take place outside of the home and school allow for children to have additional opportunities to reinforce and practice their cognitive and noncognitive skills in another way (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010).

Time spent attending extracurricular activities allows for extra opportunities for solid skill practice and development. (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010). In addition to practicing these skills, children are also able to develop and refine their social skills during extracurricular time (Badura et al., 2015). A study showed that aside from these skills and developmental benefits, participation in these activities is also associated with a higher life satisfaction and a better rating of self-health for children and adolescents (Badura et al., 2015). Given the literature about the skills, benefits, and positives of these activities, one can see that there are many benefits to participation in extracurriculars.

Sport-based Extracurricular Benefits

There are many different kinds of extracurricular activities that children can be involved in. This includes the arts, educational based clubs and activities, hobby-based activities, sports, etc. This project will focus on one category of extracurricular activities, which are sports and physical activities. While there are many benefits to all extracurriculars, sports and physical

activity offers unique benefits that others cannot. A prior study has found that there are greater benefits from participation in sports and physical activity in the form of extracurriculars versus other extracurriculars (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010). In addition to the benefits and positives of participation examined above, sports offer another layer of benefits for participants. These activities can range from organized sport teams to more individualized sports. Examples of organized sports teams are baseball, soccer, basketball, and examples of individualized sports are martial arts, horseback riding, and golf. In a prior study, benefits of different types of extracurriculars have been evaluated and conclusions have been drawn that points to the greatest benefits coming from sports participation (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010).

These greater benefits of sports based extracurriculars discussed above, include physical health, social well-being, and emotional benefits (Badura et al., 2015; Covay & Carbonaro, 2010; Findlay & Coplan, 2008; Moeijes et al., 2017; Todor & Turcu, 2018). This includes development and refinement of certain skills as well. Children are able to develop their noncognitive skills in ways that they would not typically be able to if no physical activity was involved in their extracurricular activities (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010). Additionally, there is evidence to support ideas that participation in such organized activities as a child has lasting impacts and is associated with better physical and mental health in the time of adolescents (Badura et al., 2015). Meaning, that children who start participating in such activities as a child are more likely to have better physical and mental health as they grow up.

In a previous study, it was discovered that children who have participated in sports have rated themselves higher in terms of feeling more competent and physically fit compared to their counterparts who did not participate in any sports (Findlay & Coplan, 2008). This reporting suggests that children who participate in these organized sports have higher self-esteem in their

own physical appearance as well as their physical abilities (Findlay & Coplan, 2008). Thus, not only does this participation allow for children to have better physical and mental health, but they feel better about themselves too. Additionally, involvement in physical activity and sports contributes to less anxiety, depression, tension, and stress (Todor & Turcu, 2018). Starting children in sports at younger ages also helps in supporting their development of overall wellness, mood, confidence, and even efficiency (Todor & Turcu, 2018).

Studies have also shown that elementary aged students who participate in sports teams have multiple positive impacts on their psychological health, including internalizing fewer problems, externalizing problems, and improved prosocial behavior (Moeijes et al., 2017). There is an abundance of research that support participation in sports and physical activity can be beneficial for all children (Findlay & Coplan, 2008; Moeijes et al., 2017). In addition to the emotional, physical, and mental health benefits gained from participation, there are also opportunities for social growth and development (Findlay & Coplan, 2008).

Teamwork is another major aspect of sport-based extracurriculars that brings about many benefits allowing for social growth and development. It was found that children who participate in organized sport teams have more opportunities for peer interaction than children who do not (Findlay & Coplan, 2008). Some of these meaningful interactions may include: having defined roles on a team, cooperating with others via communication, encouraging each other, and working together toward a common goal (Findlay & Coplan, 2008). The experiences gained from participating on sports teams allow for players to also have practice interacting with peers outside of the classroom (Findlay & Coplan, 2008). Sports allow for children to have a common subject matter to discuss and children can be provided with a sense of belonging as they

participate on a team. (Findlay & Coplan, 2008). Findlay and Coplan (2008) found that peer-mediated learning in terms of social and physical skills can also flourish in teamwork situations.

Extracurriculars and Children with Disabilities

In addition to the variety of benefits and positive impacts reviewed above, prior studies and literature have shown that there are additional benefits of participation for children with disabilities specifically. Given the unique nature that comes with children that have disabilities, the information that follows will highlight certain benefits and their relation to certain disability groups that have been studied. It is important to consider that research is limited in regard to children with disabilities as opposed to typically developing peers. In terms of children with physical disabilities, research has shown that participation in physical activity is a means for maintaining and even enhancing their strength and motor functioning (Law et al., 2006). Other benefits to participation in physical activity for children with disabilities includes improved gross motor functioning, improvements in aerobic capacity, and parent/child participant satisfaction (Johnson, 2009).

Research also supports that when children with special needs partake in sports, there are impactful benefits all around the child. This includes emotional, social, physical well-being, as well as general developmental benefits (Sekhri, 2019). Significant information has also been discovered through a study about participation in extracurriculars and children with intellectual disabilities and specific learning disabilities. These findings include significant support for the notion that children with such disabilities have many positive takeaways, such as social, emotional, and mental well-being benefits, from being a part of social activities, like sports (Sekhri, 2019). Time spent in these social activities, like as participating in sports or on a team, was found to be related to higher levels of social competence and this positive association was

greatest for the children with these disabilities. This study and its findings helped to establish the idea that these activities are very useful for children with disabilities and their social competence (Brooks et al., 2015).

Another study found that when children with complex communication needs are limited to home or close to home opportunities, they lack opportunities for social participation (Raghavendra et al., 2011). Therefore, by using the participation in sports and opportunities to get out of the home and take part in these sports or other physical extracurricular activities, children have more chances to socialize and develop such skills (Raghavendra et al., 2011).

Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

Inclusion within a school is an approach that includes all students with and without disabilities in one classroom together. In these placements, students are given the proper supports and accommodations needed (Hodge et al., 2009). Inclusion in extracurriculars involving physical activity and sports would look very similar to this model. This would include children of all ability levels coming together to participate together. This would involve all children being involved, not some being involved while others are on the sidelines (Unicef, 2017).

Benefits of Inclusionary Practices

Research regarding the benefits to inclusion in sports based extracurriculars is limited. Research indicates that great benefits exist as a result of inclusion for children (Idol, 2006). Children with and without disabilities can both benefit from partaking in inclusion in the classroom and in extracurriculars (Idol, 2006). One of the major benefits that has been found in regard to inclusion is acceptance and tolerance of others. Inclusionary practices help to foster ideals of acceptance and tolerance of people different than an individual's self (Idol, 2006). This also contributes to a spreading of understanding and awareness of people of all kinds. When

children work closely with other children that are different from them, they are able to better understand that other person, empathize with them, they can have meaningful interactions, and truly get to know their peers for who they are not just their label from others and society (Idol, 2006).

In a study that analyzed the peer impacts of inclusionary practices in young children, it was found that the social aspects of this practice helped in supporting children, with disabilities in their development (Justice et al., 2014). This was said to go along with the ideas brought about in the social-learning theory. This theory contains the idea that children learn through the processes of social interactions. This includes peers observing other peers and they imitate, model, and internalize the more advanced peers' behavior (Justice et al., 2014). Inclusion models allows for students to have these social interactions that inspire growth and learning (Justice et al., 2014). The values and benefits of inclusion and children' interactions in inclusion are great and can be very beneficial for students (Idol, 2006).

Extracurriculars for Children with Disabilities

Barriers to Participation

Comparatively, a lot more literature can be found that discusses the benefits and positives of children without disabilities and their participation in extracurriculars rather than those who do have disabilities. There is cause for some questioning about why the gap exists. It has been found that this gap comes from barriers to participation in sports or such physical activities for children with disabilities (Braga et al., 2018). The barriers to participation can be wide ranging including individual, environmental, and sociocultural challenges. Individual barriers could include a person and their physical or mental abilities, health or even psychological challenges, like fear (Braga et al., 2018). Environmental barriers include limited access to extracurricular

activities, budgets, lack of equipment for the activities, and lack of resources to run them effectively in a given area (Braga et al., 2018).

One of the most impactful barriers to participation involves sociocultural ideas. This includes possible stereotypes of people with disabilities, insufficient preparation of professionals, as well as parent overprotection or lack of information about programs and legislation (Braga et al., 2018). Additionally, a study suggested that the lack of parental resources and support for extracurriculars can be a barrier to their child's participation (Kleinert et al., 2007). If families are unaware of the benefits, resources, and organizations they may be hesitant to enroll their children in any after school extracurriculars. If supports were provided to parent to address these issues, then they may feel more comfortable and empowered to take steps in getting themselves and their children involved beyond the school.

Parental Influences in Participation

As indicated by research conducted about activity participation of children with disabilities, it was found that shown that parental influence and knowledge is a factor in their child's involvement in extracurricular activities (Raghavendra et al., 2011). In fact, in a study completed by Raghavendra et al. (2011), it was found that there are positive outcomes in participation involving the influence and help of the family. These influences come from the parents and siblings and their roles in supporting a child in these activities (Raghavendra et al., 2011). Siblings and parents often help the child take the first step in participation by signing them up, finding teams and information, and taking them where they need to go (Raghavendra et al., 2011). In a study that analyzed parent education and behavior in relation to their children's participation in sports, it was found that parent behaviors, including modeling and educational differences are influential pieces in child involvement in sports (Fernández-Alvira et al., 2015).

Meaning, that when a parent was aware of benefits of sports and physical activity and also took part in this themselves, their children were more likely to do the same. This shows that parents and families hold a highly influential role in their child's lives in terms of what the child does outside of school. This is cause to believe that if a parent supports a child in participation in these activities then the participation will be more likely and effective.

Prior literature speaks of ways to overcome barriers that have to do with a lack of knowledge of these extracurricular activities by targeting support for parents. Some the ideas that were provided included: to share informational events for families to take part in, have students help by talking about some activities they would want to take part in, encouraging and educating parents about how their students can get involved in such activities, and even to share the benefits of this participation (Kleinert et al., 2007). This literature also suggested using MAPs (Making Action Plans) meeting strategies and IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meetings time to help develop plans to support students in their after-school involvement (Kleinert et al., 2007). Additionally, staff and teachers can work as a bridge to introduce students and families to organizations, sponsors, and coaches (Kleinert et al., 2007). By using these strategies and supports, it is hopeful that one of the many barriers to participation in extracurriculars for children with disabilities can be overcome.

Summary

Given research, it is evident that more support, attention, and resources are needed to facilitate participation of children with disabilities in extracurricular activities. Children with mild-severe disabilities can benefit widely from such participation in physical activity outside of the school day. The variety of benefits includes mental, physical, social, and emotional growth and development. Additionally, strength, independence skills, and meaningful relationships can

also be benefits of this participation. Given the wide variety of positives associated with participation, it clear to see why one would benefit from joining in on these activities.

Another layer to this participation that was discussed involves inclusion, children of all ability levels participating in the same activities together. Again, there are many benefits to creating inclusive practices in extracurricular involvement, including acceptance, tolerance and social skill development. With such benefits of inclusive practices, it is clear that children should be encouraged to partake in these activities.

Unfortunately, children and their families face barriers to participation in such activities. One of these major barriers includes a lack of parent knowledge of such activities and a lack of resources. This project is an attempt to overcome this barrier. Information regarding extracurriculars and inclusion benefits will be shared, as well as resource guide to help parents in their first step of getting involved in these activities. This project also sets out to draw attention to the importance of the inclusion of all children in sports and physical activities, as it is not something that should be overlooked any longer.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This project was created to inform parents/guardians and families of children with wide ranging disabilities about the importance of their involvement in extracurriculars, specifically sports based team or individual activities. This included information about inclusion/peer interaction, health/well-being, and long-lasting impacts of sports activity involvement. This project contained an informational presentation, script to provide this presentation, and a handout for the parents/guardians that included resources regarding sports activities.

This project was created to make lasting impacts in children's lives as well as to influence strong peer relationships and larger community involvement. The purpose of this project was to inform parents about important benefits to participation as well as to have given them necessary material and resources to support them in getting their children involved. The writing that follows reviews the audience and setting for which this project was developed, as well as the procedures used when this project was developed.

Audience and Setting

Throughout creating this project, I kept several different groups of individuals in mind. This included parents/guardians, families, teachers, students/children, and the community. I used my experiences from student teaching in the classroom and observations that I made while in these placements to create of my project idea. I also used what I had learned about successful ways to reach out parents and communicate effectively with them to inform elements of my presentation, script, and handout as well as when defining my target audience. I considered the community throughout creating my project as well. I had to think about what kinds of

community resources and opportunities would be available to include in my project. I also thought about the impacts that my project may have if implemented in a community.

Additionally, I kept my focus on children with and without disabilities and their families on my mind and in my heart throughout each step of this project creation and development. I focused on children throughout my research as well and while I collected resources and data to share with their families. I wanted to provide real evidence of benefits and ways to improve their lives as well as helpful resources. I wanted to find organizations and resources that provided opportunities to join sports or activities that would be fun, allow them to build relationships, stay healthy, be a part of their community, and find activities to be passionate about. I also kept the children this project focused on in mind as I began generating my presentation because I wanted to be sure that I presented enough information and significant benefits to their parents/guardians so that this could influence a change in their lives.

I kept parents/guardians a priority in my mind throughout this entire project development because they were my target audience. Some of the important considerations that I put thought into were; ways in which I would be able to get the information out to the parents/guardians, what kind of a setting would this have to be given in or materials I would provide, what resources I would provide for them, if I could find affordable options for sports and activities for their children to take part in, how could I make the information understandable, and how could I present this information without pressuring them or making them feel guilty about what they did with their child after school prior to viewing the presentation.

Throughout working through these considerations and creating my project, I was able to create an ideal model of the audience and setting for my project. This project was designed for parents/guardians and families of children who have mild to extensive support needs. These

parents and guardians would also have had children who are in the elementary age range (grade levels kindergarten through fifth/sixth). This project could also benefit individuals within all socio-economic statuses. There could also be a benefit for individuals regardless of where they live, urban, rural, and/or suburban populations. The resources provided may be differed in terms of access in different locations, however, the information provided in this project would be able to reach people from all area types and walks of life. This project is targeted for these parents and guardians within the United States. I believed that the best locations to provide this project presentation would be in common school or community locations that would be accessible, public, and convenient for parents to locate and go to. Some examples of these settings could be multipurpose rooms, libraries, community buildings, clubhouses, classrooms, etc. In an effort to keep this accessible for parents, I encouraged that this be an open space where people might be able to bring their children if they did not have childcare and that it be offered during a time when parents would mostly likely be available. I also decided that this must remain free for anyone to attend and receive the resources.

Procedures for Developing the Project

I took many different steps in developing this project. I began by creating a list of possible topics in which I am passionate about. I used observations and my experiences that I had while completing my student teaching to find possible areas of need that I could address using my work. Once I decided that I would be completing my project about inclusion, sports activities, and children with disabilities, I started my next step of my project.

The next step of this process was to conduct research for my project. I did months' worth of research to educate myself about my chosen topic. I learned all about extracurricular activities, sport involvement, inclusion, benefits of these practices, involvement of these activities by

children with disabilities, barriers to involvement, and ideas for overcoming the barriers to involvement. After analyzing my notes and information that I had learned, I began to develop ideas for how to address an area of need that I recognized. I learned that the benefits that come about when a child is involved in inclusive activities as well as sports activities are so significant that they should be brought to light. Unfortunately, I also found that there were barriers to participation for children with disabilities. I decided that my project would focus on overcoming one of these barriers which was that parents are sometimes uninformed of the benefits to participation and they may not know about how to access such resources. I sought out to create an informational presentation for parents/guardians and families of children with disabilities. I wanted to encourage them to help their children be involved by participating in inclusive sports and their community.

After I decided how I wanted to address the area of need, I began to take steps toward developing my project. I started with creating an informational presentation that provided information about the benefits of inclusion and sports-based activities as well as steps to take to get involved in these activities. I then completed additional research to find resources to provide to the parents/guardians and families. After locating these resources, I organized these materials by regions that they could be accessed in, as well as into either team based or individual sports activity categories. I used these resources to create a handout to give out during the informational presentation. After I developed these elements of the presentation, I created a script that would be used to go along with my presentation. My hope is that these materials can be used in a wide variety of communities and that they help to change the lives of children and their families.

Chapter Four

Results

The project that I created is made up of three different parts each contributing to an informational presentation for parents/guardian about children with disabilities, sports, and inclusion. The goal of this project is to provide information about the benefits of sports and inclusive sport participation to these parents/guardians and to encourage them to get their children involved. I developed these project elements to be universal in that anyone could be able to give this presentation to parents/guardians and families in their community. My goal for this project is that that the parents/guardians and families of children with and even without disabilities are able to learn about the importance of getting their children involved in sports or sports related activities after school hours. I also wanted to reach them and advocate for inclusion and inclusionary sports. I wanted to create a project that would allow for parents/ guardians and families to be empowered with knowledge and to give them the tools to make the first steps in involving their children in sports. My hope is that the three components of this project help in reaching my goal to make a difference in people's lives.

The first component of this project can be found in Appendix A and is the Sports for ALL PowerPoint presentation. These slides are full of information about the benefits of sports and inclusion including physical health, mental health, and social-emotional benefits. The slides were to created flow and to inspire an interactive meeting for parents/guardians/ families. The slides contain activities, questions/comments, and pages of information for a presenter to go over. The PowerPoint also contains a reference page that can be seen by anyone who presents or attends the meeting so that they know where the information was found.

This presentation is directly linked to the second part of the project which can be found in Appendix B and contains a Presentation Guide for the Sports for ALL PowerPoint presentation. This guide contains detailed information for any person to pick this up and be able to deliver a successful presentation. It includes notes, materials lists, explanation of activities, suggestion, and scripts that correlate with each slide. I created this guide with the user in mind and organized it in an easy to read table format. On the left side of the table I included images of each PowerPoint slide and on the corresponding right side of the table I included any and all information they would need. My hope is that this guide can help any presenter feel confident and supported when giving the Sports for ALL presentation in their community.

The third and final part of my project can be found in Appendix C, and is the Sports for ALL resource brochure. This two-page brochure was created to be given out at the informational meeting or presentation. This brochure contains three categories of resources including individual sports opportunities, team sports opportunities, and other resources that I found to get these children and their families involved. Each of these categories holds lists of resources that include organization names, a brief description, as well as the website so anyone can locate further information about getting involved in them. This final component of my project is used to tie everything together and to move to the next step of getting children and their families involved. My goal is that all three of these components used together can provide parents/guardians and families with the knowledge and tools they need to get their child involved in inclusive sports and in their community.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The purpose of this project is to educate families of children with disabilities about the many benefits that can come with their children being involved in sports after school. This project also includes information about inclusive sports and the additional benefits that these sports programs include. It was created to help families to overcome one of the major barriers to sports participation for their children. By giving these families the information and tools needed to learn and feel empowered, it is my hope that I inspire some of them to get their children involved in these sports, especially inclusive sports. I made this project to bring light to the incredible benefits that inclusion possess and to encourage families to not let inclusion for their children end when school does. It is my hope that this project in encourages families to take the next steps in getting their children involved in sports and to make connections in their community. In the writing that follows, I will address the limitations of the project, the next steps, lessons I learned, and a summary of my work and thoughts.

Limitations of Project

I think the largest limitation in this project is that I have yet to implement it in any community. Given the fact that it is currently summer break for schools and that there are public gathering restrictions due to the COVID 19 pandemic, I have created this project without testing it out or gathering feedback from parents/guardians and their families about it. Had I had the chance to try out my project I may have been able to make beneficial changes based on feedback I received.

Additionally, I discovered another limitation while I created the project elements. I found that I kept wanting to expand my project and add to it but I was limited on my time or

unlimited resources. If I had infinite time, there would be so much more that I could do to reach more parents/guardians and families. My project brochure is something that I found had limitations. I was only able to create one brochure with resources for parents. If I had infinite resources, I could have created a brochure with resources for each state of the United States. I would love for this project brochure to have resources that were specific to the states and locations that the children and their families lived in.

Another limitation that I found is that the presentation offers a brief meeting for parents/guardians and families. If I had these infinite resources, I would love to have made this a multi-day parent/ guardian and family informational training experience where parents and children could learn together. I would include presentations, workshops, guest speakers with first-hand experience, and much more. I would love to host a resource fair as part of this experience. I could invite local organizations to have booths for attendees to visit. It would be great to have opportunities for children and their families to learn out resources in person, to try out different sports, and learn together. This would offer them even more chances to make deeper connections and to find sports activities that they could sign up for. I feel that my project could make a bigger difference and impact for children with and without disabilities if I had endless resources like information, time, connections, and money.

Next Steps

My next steps for this project would be to implement it in my community. I would also like to ask for feedback and give this presentation in multiple settings, so that I can ensure it would be a successful tool for attendees and that the presenters had enough support. I think that this would be a great next step before asking others to implement this in the own communities. I would then like to try to get a group of teachers of volunteers together that could implement this

presentation in their own community as well. This could act as a great pilot program to get Sports for ALL in more communities. Eventually, I would love to keep expanding the number of presenters so that this project can reach more people.

Lessons Learned and Educational Implications

Throughout this entire writing process, I felt myself learning and growing as a student. I had little to no experience with this kind of academic writing before I began this journey. I learned quickly that I needed to be patient with myself and to dig deeper to become a better writer. The course work required to begin this writing process was extremely valuable to me as I began creation this project. I also learned about how to use databases to find information, how to evaluate resources/ find useful sources for my work, and I how to write a literature review.

I gained a great deal of knowledge about my chosen topic throughout my research process as well. I spent weeks reading about inclusion, extracurriculars, sports, and parent/guardian involvement in children's lives. I became competent of all about the benefits of sports including information about physical, mental, and social-emotional benefits that involvement can provide for all children. I also learned about how children with disabilities can specifically benefit from sports and physical activity. I acquired insight about inclusive and adaptive sports, including many different sports programs that are available for children in the United States.

Aside from the information and skills that I learned or developed; I also learned some lessons about myself during this writing process. I learned how to be more patient and kind to myself when it comes to my work. I learned how to balance pushing myself with knowing when to take a break. I learned how to better cope with stress and discovered more ways to care for my mind and body when I needed to. Finally, I learned how to be proud of myself and the work that

I do. My graduate educational journey has been a challenging in so many ways but now looking back on everything that I have done I feel proud of myself and of the work that I have completed. I hope that others who create projects and writing like this are also able to learn to be kind to themselves and be proud of their accomplishments.

Based on what I have learned and experienced, my best recommendation for others who may be creating a project like this is to select a topic that you really care about. I was very passionate about inclusion and sports when I decided to do my project on this topic. Throughout this process, my interest in inclusionary practices and inclusive sports has grown even more. I am very grateful that I selected the topic I did. Working towards something that I had passion about made this project process enjoyable and at times fun. I loved designing my project elements and it makes me so happy to think of the possibility that this project could help someone someday. In terms of my best practice recommendations, I have a few ideas for practices that worked for me. I would advise keeping written notes of ideas or changes you may want to make as they come up. I kept notes for myself so that if in the middle of dinner, I had an idea I could quickly write it down and come back to when I get back to working on the project. Another practice I did that I found to be helpful, was to set daily goals for myself. I would write down what I wanted to get done that work period in my planner and I tried my best to keep myself to it. My last piece of advice would be to be flexible and forgiving with yourself. You will make lots of changes to your work and nothing will be perfect the first time and that is alright. I found that these were the best practices for me, I know everyone is different, but I hope this may help someone else who may be creating a project like mine someday.

Conclusion

I hope this project is able to touch someone's life someday and to make a difference for them. I want this project to inspire families to get out into their community and to get their children involved. I want to them to live their best lives possible, to take every opportunity they can, and to find things to be passionate about. My passion for inclusion and inclusionary practices continues to grow and develop and I hope this never stops. My hope is that this project is one small step for myself in my educational and career journey. I want to take what I have learned and the opportunities that I have to inspire change and to be the best teacher and advocate that I can for my students. I would like to end my writing with a quote that has inspired me to live my life working to make other's lives better; "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others" - Mahatma Gandhi

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Appendix A

Sports for ALL PowerPoint Presentation

Welcome

**Thank you for
coming!**



Introductions

- ▶ Hello, my name is _____, and I am here because...

Sports for ALL

- ▶ **How getting involved
can change your child's
life.**



My Child Activity

My
Child...

1.) Grab a sticky note and pen near you.

2.) Please finish this statement and write it on your sticky note.

” My child...”

Ex: “My child...always makes me laugh.”

“My child... is an only child.”

- 3.) When finished, please add your sticky note to the poster/board at the front of them room.

Extracurricular Activity

- **What are Extracurricular Activities?**
 - **Organized activities that children take part in after school.**
- **Children can practice skills, learn new things, find passions, and HAVE FUN!**

Examples

- **School based programs**
- **Arts**
- **Sports**
- **Games**
- **Hobbies**

And Much More!



Think-Pair-Share

Please think about and share about the following topics with someone near you:

- Briefly describe what your child's day looks like after school.
- Share whether your child participates in any after school activities.

If **yes**, please talk about what activities and your experiences that you have had with this.

If **no**, please share your interest level in getting your child involved and what activities are you interested in for your child.





Sports

- Physical activity
- Many kinds of sports
 - **Team-** Playing with or alongside other children during a game/competition.
 - *Baseball*
 - *Soccer*
 - *Basketball*
 - **Individual-** Playing on their own or competing alone while still on a team together.
 - *Martial arts*
 - *Horseback riding*
 - *Golf*

Questions?

Comments?





Why Sports?

- Sports offer greater benefits than other extracurriculars
- Long-lasting benefits- Follow children through their childhood and into adolescents
- Some of the benefits include...
 - Good physical health
 - Mental health benefits
 - Social-emotional well-being



Benefits of Sport Participation

Let's dig deeper!



Physical Benefits

- Physical activity
 - CDC
 - 60 minutes of physical activity
 - Prevents many dangerous health conditions
 - Supports children in school
 - Attendance
 - Grades
 - Behavior
 - Cognitive skills
- Sports
 - Allow for children to exercise and be physically active
 - Strength, Motor Skills, & Aerobic capacity

Questions?

Comments?





Mental Health

Benefits

- Rate themselves higher in feeling:
 - Competent
 - Physically fit
- **More Confidence & Better Self-esteem**
- **Less...**
 - **Stress**
 - **Anxiety**
 - **Tension**
 - **Depression**
- **Other physiological health benefits**
 - **Internalizing/Externalizing fewer problems**
 - **Prosocial behavior**



➤ Social-Emotional Benefits

- Sports provide chances to be social and to improve in many ways
 - Develop social skills
 - Practice skills
 - Communication
 - Self-expression
 - Teamwork
 - Peer interaction
 - Friendships
 - Find passions

Questions?

Comments?





Inclusion

Children of all ability levels play together!

Children receive even more benefits when taking part in inclusive sports

- **Learn about other children**
- **Learn from other children**
- **Acceptance**
- **Tolerance**
- **Empathy**
- **Social Relationships**
- **More connections**
- **Community Involvement**



What about **YOU?**

- Something that you and your child will share together
- Make **memories** together
- Get both of you out of the house
- Make **community** connections
- Make **friends** of other parents
- Have **FUN** together
- Watch your child grow as an athlete
- Much more!



What's Next?



**Thank you so much
for coming.**

*Please enjoy your resource
handouts!*

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Appendix B

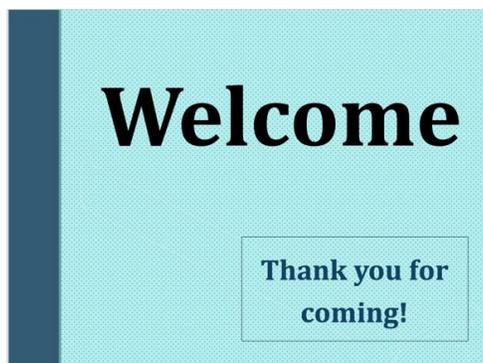
Sports for ALL Presentation Guide

(The following pages contain notes, ideas, and scripts to provide guidance to anyone who may give this presentation.)

Materials:

- Sports for ALL PowerPoint presentation slides, presentation guide, and resource handouts.
- Technology necessary to show presentation (i.e. projector, computer, screen, etc.)
- Tables and chairs
- Sticky notes
- Pens/pencils/markers
- Sticker name tags/Name badges/ or foldable paper to allow guests to make name tags
- Poster paper/wall/board
- Suggested:** Snacks and drinks for guests

Welcome



*Have presentation set up upon guest arrival, have materials set out on tables (in back/side of room or at the guests tables, i.e. round tables can be set up to sit attendees and materials can be set in the middle of the tables) welcome guests in/greet them, direct guests to snacks or seats and direct them to the name tag making materials. Encourage guests to make a name tag using the provided materials so that everyone can see their name. *

*This may be a great time to play some fun and welcoming music while people arrive. *

(Next Slide)

Introductions

Introduce yourself to the group. This is a time for you to share who you are, why you are giving this presentation, background, relation to the children/ parents, etc.



Introductions

▶ Hello, my name is _____, and I am here because...

“Hello, my name is _____, I work/volunteer for _____, I have a background in _____, My passions include _____,” etc.

This is also a great time to review of any necessary information for the guests. This could include, but is not limited to any health or safety information such as emergency exits, restrooms, etc.

*Ask attendees to introduce themselves to each other. *

“Just as I just introduced myself to all of you, I would love for you to introduce yourself to the people around you. You can use the prompt up on the screen to help you. This reads ‘Hello, my name is _____, and I am here because...’ Have fun getting to know each other and I will begin the presentation in just a bit.”

(Next Slide)

Title Slide

Sports for ALL

▶ How getting involved can change your child's life.

(Begin Presentation)

“Thank you everyone for coming. Today I will be sharing a presentation with you that will review information about involving your children in sports activities.”

“We will talk about extracurricular activities and sports, as well as the benefits to participating in these activities. We will also talk about inclusion and the benefits to involving children in inclusive sports.”

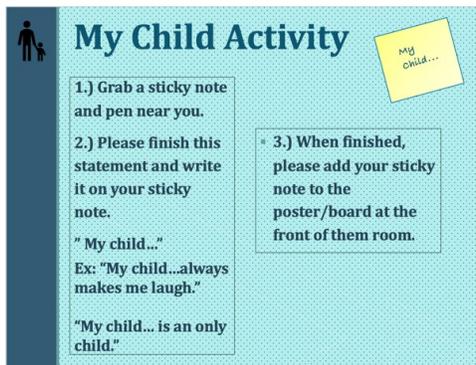
“Throughout this time together, I will review this presentation and we will do some activities together. Please participate in ways that make you most comfortable. I also will take time to check in and ask if there are any questions or comments. Please feel free to share or ask what

you would like at this time. Following this presentation, I will be providing everyone with a resource guide from 'Sports for ALL.' This will include that will have information about organizations and sport opportunities to sign your child up for."

"Thank you again for attending and for being a part of getting your child involved. My hope is that this presentation provides you with an opportunity to learn something new and inspire you to make the first steps in getting your child involved in sports after school."

(Next Slide)

My Child Activity



My Child Activity

- 1.) Grab a sticky note and pen near you.
- 2.) Please finish this statement and write it on your sticky note.
- 3.) When finished, please add your sticky note to the poster/board at the front of them room.

" My child..."
Ex: "My child...always makes me laugh."

"My child... is an only child."

*Make sure to have the materials on hand before introducing this activity. *

Materials:

-Sticky notes

-Pens/pencils

-Poster paper/wall/board

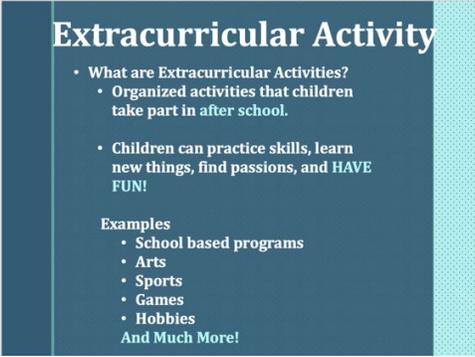
-Introduce/ Explain Activity

"We are going to kick off our time together with a quick activity to get our brains thinking about our children. There are sticky notes and pens/pencils near you. On those notes please finish this statement.

*"My child..." Please feel free to write what comes to mind, but **please note that I will be reading some/all these aloud**, so no need to write your name unless you would like. When you finish what you have written please come up and stick it on this poster/board."*

(Give time to complete activity, approx.5 minutes)

*Bring group back together when the last person has placed their notes on the poster/board. Read aloud what all/some of the notes say.

	<p>This would be a great time to point out similarities in what was said or maybe things that you noticed. You could also bring this back to why you are all there that day. *</p> <p><i>EX: “Based on what I just read from these notes, it is clear the love that you all have for your children. It is also clear that you all want the very best for them and want them to make the most of their lives. I am so happy you are here because I think today will help you find something for your child that could offer many opportunities for them to grow.”</i></p> <p>(Next Slide)</p>
<p>Extracurricular Activities</p> 	<p>*This slide is where you begin to dive into the material and information for the attendees. *</p> <p><i>“Great, thanks so much for taking part in that fun activity. Now we will briefly discuss extracurriculars and what they are. Extracurricular activities are organized activities that children take part in after school hours. I am sure that many of you are familiar with these or maybe have taken part in them yourselves. These can be either a part of the school or separate from the school. Children who take part in these activities have extra opportunities after school to practice their skills, try new things, learn new material, find their passions, and to have fun after.”</i></p> <p><i>“Some of the examples of these activities, specifically for elementary aged children include; after school programs/clubs, the arts, such as dance, drawing, and painting, as well as hobby-based activities. This presentation will be focusing on sports and physical activity-based programs that take place outside of school hours. To get thinking</i></p>

	<p><i>more about after school time, I will ask to take part in another activity...”</i></p> <p>(Next Slide)</p>
<p>Think-Pair- Share Activity</p>  <p>The image shows a slide titled "Think-Pair-Share" with a blue background and white text. It includes instructions for participants to think about and share their child's after-school activities, with specific prompts for "yes" and "no" responses.</p>	<p><i>“Now I will ask you all to do an activity much like many students do in school, this is called a ‘think-pair-share.’ I will show you a prompt and ask you to think about, then find someone near you, and finally both of you share your ideas.”</i></p> <p><i>“I would like you to think about think and share about what your child’s day looks like after school. If it helps you to visualize, try to picture you and your child and allow your mind to go through what happens when your child is out of school.”</i></p> <p><i>“I also want you to think about whether or not your child participates in any after school activities. If <u>they do</u>, please briefly talk about what activities and your experience. If <u>they do not</u>, please share your interest level in getting your child involved as well as what activities you think would interest them.”</i></p> <p><i>“I will give you time to think and discuss, and then I will ask for whoever is comfortable to share some of your ideas with the group altogether.”</i></p> <p>(Allow for group to finish their discussions, bring them back together approx. 5-10 minutes)</p> <p>* Ask for a few participants to share some of their ideas. *</p> <p>(Next Slide)</p>

<p>Sports</p>  <p>The slide titled "Sports" features a dark blue background with a light blue patterned border on the right. It includes a basketball icon and a list of sports categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical activity • Many kinds of sports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team- Playing with or alongside other children during a game/competition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseball • Soccer • Basketball • Individual- Playing on their own or competing alone while still on a team together. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martial arts • Horseback riding • Golf 	<p><i>“Thank you so much for sharing and for completing that activity all together.”</i></p> <p>*If you heard people sharing about sports now would be a great time to highlight those discussions and share a bit of what you heard. *</p> <p><i>“This presentation will be focused on sports. Sports make up such a unique and exciting part of extracurricular activities. Sports involve taking part in physical activity and this is what makes them so special.”</i></p> <p><i>“There are wide variety of sports that are accessible for children to take part in. There are two main categories of sports activities this includes individual activities and team sports.”</i></p> <p><i>“Some examples of the individual activities are martial arts, horseback riding, and golf. Examples of organized sports teams are baseball, soccer, and basketball.”</i></p> <p><i>“The resource handout that you will be given at the end of our time together will include information for individual and team sports.”</i></p> <p>(Next Slide)</p>
<p>Questions & Comments</p>  <p>The slide titled "Questions & Comments" has a light blue background with a dark blue vertical bar on the left. It features the text "Questions?" and "Comments?" in large, bold, black font, along with a small icon of three people.</p>	<p>*Now is a good time to check in and see if anyone has any questions about what extracurricular activities are, what sports include, maybe any comments about what was discussed thus far. *</p> <p>*You can ask that the guests chat amongst themselves in pairs or small groups. You can prompt them by saying something like <i>“Please share if you have any questions or talk about your own experiences with extracurriculars or sports. Please share amongst the people near you in pairs or groups of three or four.”</i> During this</p>

time, you can walk around and check in with the small groups and try to answer questions as they come up. You can also have the groups share any questions that may have come up during their talking time or see if any groups would like to share any memorable comments or discussions they had.*

OR

You can ask the whole group for the questions and comments.

“Are there any questions or/comments about anything that we have discussed so far before we dive into more information?”

*Allow time for questions/ do your best to answer and take as many comments as you feel appropriate, perhaps 3-5. *)

“Great, now let’s move on and dig deeper into some information about sports involvement.”

(Next Slide)

Why Choose Sports?



Why Sports?

- Sports offer greater benefits than other extracurriculars
- Long-lasting benefits- Follow children through their childhood and into adolescents
- Some of the benefits include...
 - Good physical health
 - Mental health benefits
 - Social-emotional well-being

Badura et al., 2015; Covay & Carbonaro, 2010; Findlay & Coplan, 2008; Moeijes et al., 2017; Todor & Turcu, 2018.

“I will now discuss some of the benefits of sports and this will explain why they are the focus of this presentation.”

“We know that sports or athletics may not be everyone’s first choice, but today we will be focusing on sports and sport involvement because they offer many unique benefits that other extracurricular activities may not be able to.”

“This is not to say that other activities cannot benefit your children, I will just be offering more insight about why sports would be a great option for them to take part in.”

	<p><i>“A prior study has shown that the greatest benefits from extracurriculars come from sports. Some of these unique benefits are centered around the fact that sports provide kids with a chance to move and be active. This kind of movement allows for children to develop and maintain good physical health. Other benefits of sports include emotional regulation, mental health, and social well-being.”</i></p> <p><i>“It has also been proven that the benefits to a child’s mental and physical health from sports involvement have a lasting impact on them. These positives stick with them as they grow up into adolescents.”</i></p> <p><i>“Moving forward I will be sharing more about the benefits to participating in sports and then we will talk about inclusion in sports.”</i></p> <p>(Next Slide)</p>
<p>Benefits of Sport Participation</p> 	<p><i>“Alright now I will be sharing some information about more of the benefits that come with playing sports.”</i></p> <p><i>“I just reviewed that some of the benefits that come with sports are physical health, mental health, and social well-being. Now let’s talk more about these, In the information that follows I will share about each of these benefits in more depth.”</i></p> <p>(Next Slide)</p>
<p>Physical Benefits</p>	<p><i>“Let’s first talk about the physical health benefits.”</i></p> <p><i>“The CDC, or Center for Disease Control and Prevention says that according to The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans it is</i></p>



Physical Benefits

- Physical activity
 - CDC
 - 60 minutes of physical activity
 - Prevents many dangerous health conditions
 - Supports children in school
 - Attendance
 - Grades
 - Behavior
 - Cognitive skills
- Sports
 - Allow for children to exercise and be physically active
 - Strength, Motor Skills, & Aerobic capacity

CDC, 2020; Law et al., 2006; Johnson, 2009

recommend that children ages 6-17 take part in 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily.”

“Taking part in regular physical activities helps to prevent health conditions such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, as well as some cancers.”

“The CDC also included information about how being physically active can improve a child’s school performance. I will share some of what they said with you. The CDC says that children who are physically active tend to have better school attendance, better grades, classroom behaviors, and even cognitive performance, like memory.”

“Additionally, in a study conducted about children with physical disabilities who were involved in sports, it was found that there were major improvements and benefits for them. There were improvements in the strength building, their gross motor skills, and their aerobic capacity.”

“Given this information, we can see how important it can be to get our kiddos moving regularly. It is both good for their bodies and health.”

“Sports teams and individual sports give children an opportunity to get moving sometimes multiple times a week. This ensures that children are being physically active and reaping more physical benefits more than they would be if they were not involved in sports.”

(Next Slide)

Questions & Comments

*Now may be a good time pause and allow the attendees to digest the information that you have provided them with about the uniqueness

Questions?

Comments?



of sports and the physical benefits associated with participation. Some may want to share comments about their reactions and experiences. Some may have questions regarding the information provided. *

* You can ask that the guests chat amongst themselves in pairs or small groups. You can prompt them by saying something like *“Please share if you have any questions or talk about your reactions to the information that I just presented about sports benefits or the physical health benefits. Have you seen this in your own life? Please talk amongst the people near you in pairs or groups of three or four.”*

During this time, you can walk around and check in with the small groups and try to answer questions as they come up. You can also have the groups share any questions that may have come up during their talking time or see if any groups would like to share any memorable comments or discussions they had.*

OR

You can ask the whole group for the questions and comments.

“Are there any questions/comments about anything that we have discussed so far before continue talking about the benefits to sports participation?”

*Allow time for questions/ your do best to answer and take as many comments as you feel appropriate, perhaps 3-5. *

(Next Slide)

Mental Health Benefits

“Now that we have explored the physical health benefits, this is a great time to jump into mental health benefits that come from sports participation.”



Mental Health Benefits

- Rate themselves higher in feeling:
 - Competent
 - Physically fit
- More Confidence & Better Self-esteem
- Less...
 - Stress
 - Anxiety
 - Tension
 - Depression
- Other physiological health benefits
 - Internalizing/Externalizing fewer problems
 - Prosocial behavior

Findlay & Coplan, 2008; Moeljes et al., 2017; Sekhri, 2019; Todor & Turcu, 2018.

“I will now share some information about benefits that has been found through numerous studies that have been conducted about children participating in sports.”

“One study found that children who are physically active in sports, rated themselves in feeling competent and physically fit compared to their counterparts that did not participate in sports like they did. So, these children were more active physically and feel it in themselves as well.”

“It has also discovered that children who take part in sports had more confidence in themselves. As well as better self-esteem which can be essential for children growing up. Self-esteem contributes to how children view themselves and these children saw themselves in a much better light when playing sports.”

*“Other **major** benefits to sports and this physical activity includes less **stress, anxiety, tension,** and even **depression** for children. Each of these mental health challenges is lessened with sport participation.”*

“Additionally, there are other physiological health benefits to this participation. This includes internalizing, externalizing fewer problems, and developing prosocial behavior.”

(Next Slide)

Social-Emotional Benefits

“In addition to the numerous physical and mental health benefits that children can experience when they participate in sports, children are able to grow socially and emotionally.”



Social-Emotional Benefits

- Sports provide chances to be social and to improve in many ways
 - Develop social skills
 - Practice skills
 - Communication
 - Self-expression
 - Teamwork
 - Peer interaction
 - Friendships
 - Find passions

Findlay & Coplan, 2008; Raghavendra et al., 2011; Sekhri, 2019.

“The confidence and self-esteem improvements that I just mentioned help children when it comes to their social interactions with other children.”

“A study once found that children with intellectual and specific learning disabilities had huge benefits in their mental and emotional health when they participate in social activities, like sports.”

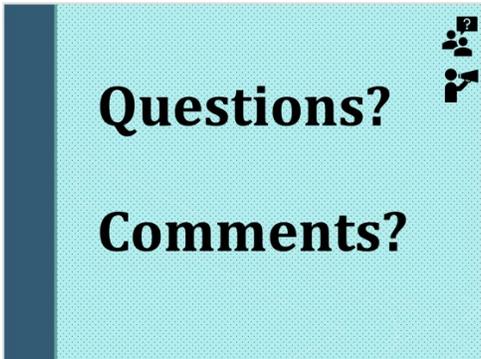
“Sports can give many children opportunities to be social and practice their social skills with peers in a comfortable environment.”

“Another significant study found that children whom have complex communication needs have more chances to develop their social skills and socialize when given chances in activities such as sports. These are huge opportunities for these children that many miss out on after school.”

“Team sports for example, provides children with many opportunities to be social and build relationships. These sports offer children with a define role on a team that has been shown to help them in social situations. Teams allow for children to cooperate with others, have practice in communicating, encourage one another, to work together toward a common goal, and help children develop leadership skills.”

“Each of these meaningful interactions help children in their social skills and contribute to their social and emotional health.”

“Additionally, sports allow for children to find a place where they feel they belong and where they can express themselves through their passions.”

	<p><i>“Without sports, children could be missing out on many of these rich opportunities for social interaction that can improve their lives.”</i></p> <p>(Next Slide)</p>
<p>Questions & Comments</p> 	<p>*This may be a good time pause and allow the attendees to think about the information you just provided them with in terms of the mental, social, and emotional benefits. Some may want to share comments about their reactions and experiences. Some may have questions regarding the information provided. *</p> <p>*You can ask that the guests chat amongst themselves in pairs or small groups. You can prompt them by saying something like <i>“Please share if you have any questions or talk about your reactions to the information regarding the mental health benefits or the social-emotional benefits. Have you seen or experienced any of these in your own life? Please talk amongst the people near you in pairs or groups of three or four.”</i> During this time, you can walk around and check in with the small groups and try to answer questions as they come up. You can also have the groups share any questions that may have come up during their talking time or see if any groups would like to share any memorable comments or discussions they had.*</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>You can ask the whole group for the questions and comments.</p> <p><i>“Are there any questions/comments about any of this new information that we have discussed so far before continue talking about the benefits to participation?”</i></p> <p>*Allow time for questions/ your do best to answer and take as many comments as you feel appropriate, perhaps 3-5. *</p>

	(Next Slide)
<p>Inclusion</p>  <p>Inclusion</p> <p>Children of all ability levels play together!</p> <p>Children receive even more benefits when taking part in inclusive sports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about other children • Learn from other children • Acceptance • Tolerance • Empathy • Social Relationships • More connections • Community Involvement <p><small>Hodge et al., 2009; Idol, 2006; Unicef, 2017</small></p>	<p><i>“Now I will be talking about something that many of you have probably heard about before or are very familiar with, and that is inclusion.”</i></p> <p><i>“Inclusion is a practice at school involves children with and without disabilities sharing a classroom together, learning and growing all together.”</i></p> <p><i>“Well, sports also offer their own kind of inclusion. Inclusion in sports involve children of all ability levels participating in a sport together, on the same team, or being involved in the same sport/competition together.”</i></p> <p><i>“While there are of course benefits that come with participation in any sports, I am here today to encourage you to consider inclusive sports. These inclusive sports add another layer of benefits that others cannot offer.”</i></p> <p><i>“Benefits to inclusion extend beyond children with disabilities, inclusionary practices benefit ALL children of all abilities.”</i></p> <p><i>“Here are some of the added benefits that inclusion brings about... The first is that these practices allow for children to learn about other children that may be different or live differently than they do. This time together has proven that children’s mentality toward tolerance and acceptance towards other was improved.”</i></p>

	<p><i>“Inclusion helps to foster this acceptance and change children in ways that make them more welcoming of children who are different than they are.”</i></p> <p><i>“Additionally, children’s understanding and awareness of others is heightened in inclusionary practices. Children are able to strip away labels that society may place on others through these close interactions and they begin to see other children for who they are.”</i></p> <p><i>“A previous study also found that children are also better to empathize with other children in these settings given these close interactions.”</i></p> <p><i>“Inclusion of all children also allows for your children to meet more people, make wider connections in the community, and develop a stronger sense of belonging.”</i></p> <p><i>“Again, all sports are encouraged, but with all of the added benefits to inclusionary practices, it is clear to see that inclusive sports could offer even more benefits for your child. Who wouldn’t want to get the very most out of each experience your child has?”</i></p> <p><i>“I will now talk a bit about what these sports could even offer for you as a parent.”</i></p> <p>(Next Slide)</p>
<p>What about YOU?</p>	<p><i>“Alright, I have shared with you many of the benefits that your children can experience when they participate in sports, especially inclusive sports... but what about all of you?”</i></p>



What about YOU?

- Something that you and your child will share together
- Make memories together
- Get both of you out of the house
- Make community connections
- Make friends of other parents
- Have FUN together
- Watch your child grow as an athlete
- Much more!

“You can get a lot out of this participation as well. I will now share some of the possibilities, I am sure that you can think of some of your own personal benefits as well.”

“When your child is involved in sports this can give you a common talking point and something to share in together. A lot of bonding can come from talk about their sport, talking while heading to practices and games/competitions, and even at home practice.”

“Sports are also a great way to get your children and even yourself out of the house and outside or in the community.”

“Many parents make connections together when their children play sports together, maybe you could even make a new friend.”

“Sports can provide you and your child with something to share in and it can be so much FUN for you and them.”

“The biggest benefit of all is that you would know that you have done something to change your child’s life and provide them with so many great benefits.”

(Next Slide)

What’s Next?



“Well now that you have listened through this presentation, you may be thinking alright, now what?”

“Should I get my child involved?”

“Maybe you are thinking; How can I find out where to involve my child?”

	<p><i>“Maybe you still aren’t convinced that this sport involvement is for your child? Maybe you want to do some of your own research at home...?”</i></p> <p><i>“And all of this is alright. I want to thank you again for coming today for this presentation.”</i></p> <p><i>“Thank you for taking the time to listen and get informed today about one way you could change your child’s life. My hope is that you are able to take away something today and that it will make a difference for you and your child.”</i></p> <p><i>“Please do what you feel comfortable in these next steps, you after all know yourself and your child best.”</i></p> <p>(Next Slide)</p>
<p>Final Slide</p>  <p>Thank you so much for coming.</p> <p><i>Please enjoy your resource handouts!</i></p>	<p><i>“Before you leave, I will give each of you a resource guide that will provide you with information and resources/ organizations to get your child involved in sports.”</i></p> <p><i>“Please enjoy these handouts and you can use them to guide you in making these next steps toward involvement.”</i></p> <p><i>“Thank you again for coming out, hope you have a beautiful rest of your day/evening. Hope to see you all out in the community soon!”</i></p> <p>*You can also say this at the very end (If you plan to stay and talk/answer questions) *</p> <p><i>“Please find me if you want to chat or ask me any questions.”</i></p> <p>(End Presentation)</p>

Appendix C

Sports for ALL Resource Brochure



Resource Brochure

This brochure includes resources and organization names to help you take the next steps in getting your child involved in sports. It is encouraged that you look into or research the resources that interest you to determine if they would be a best fit for you and your child.

Individual Sports Opportunities

Healthy Kids Running Series: Provides families with inclusive running experiences. Offers racing and virtual running experiences.
www.healthykidsrunningseries.org

RISE Adaptive Sports: Provides programs, camps, sports team involvement including; fishing, parasailing, volleyball, tubing, skating, and much more!
www.riseadaptivesports.org/programs

Special Olympics: Young Athletes Program (Ages 2-7) provides a variety of involvement opportunities ranging from individual to team sport involvement. The sport opportunities include; golf, bowling, equestrian, dance, gymnastics, and so much more!
www.resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/young-athletes

Individual Sports Opportunities

Blaze Sports America: Offers sports programs including adaptive track & field and swimming.
www.blazesports.org/youth

C.A.S.T for Kids: Provides opportunities for children with disabilities and their families to be involved in the sport of fishing.
www.castforkids.org

Exceptional Sports: Free! Offers a collection of inclusive sports for ages 3-17. Individual sports include dance, karate, and other fitness opportunities.
www.e-sports.org



Sports for ALL

How getting involved can change your child's life!



Team Sport Opportunities

AYSO VIP: Specialized soccer program for children and adults with mental and physical disabilities.

www.ayso.org/play/vip

Blaze Sports America: Offers sport team programs/ camps including adaptive and wheelchair basketball.

www.blazesports.org/youth

Exceptional Sports: Free! Offers a collection of inclusive team sports for ages 3-17. Team sports include soccer, basketball, baseball, dance, and other fitness opportunities.

www.e-sports.org

Infinite Flow Kids: Inclusive dance company/outreach opportunities for children of all abilities to dance together.

www.infiniteflowdance.org

Little League Challenger Division: Adaptive baseball program for children with ranging disabilities.

www.littleleague.org/play-little-league/challenger

Marlton Rec Council's Sports Unity

Program: Free! All Inclusive sports programs Baseball, Street Hockey, Soccer, Basketball, Football, Cheer, Track, and Kickball.

www.werockthespectrummountlaurel.com/all-inclusive-sports-program

Team Sport Opportunities

Move Along: Provides inclusive and adaptive sports and recreation opportunities for children of all ability levels.

www.movealonginc.org/programs

Pop Warner Challenger Division: Adaptive football program for children with ranging disabilities.

www.popwarner.com

Special Olympics/ Unified Sports: Promote and provide opportunities for children PreK-12 to be involved in inclusive and adaptive sports. These sport programs include; cheer, dance, badminton, basketball, tennis, soccer, softball, and so much more!

www.resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/young-athletes

and
www.specialolympics.org/our-work/sports/unified-sports



Other Resources to get Involved and to get Moving!

Adaptive Adventures: Programs include opportunities for children-adults to attend camps/clinics. This includes cycling, skiing, snowboarding, rock climbing, wakeboarding, and much more.

www.adaptiveadventures.org

American Camp Association: Offers camps for children and families that meet their needs. Camps are open for children with and without disabilities and offer many opportunities for growth.

www.acacamps.org

Best Day Foundation: Offers individual with wide ranging disabilities opportunities to have outdoor adventures including tandem surfing, paddleboard, beach/snow activities, and much more!

www.bestdayfoundation.org

Wilderness Inquiry: Programs include providing outdoor vacations/ experiences. This includes all-inclusive, accessible outdoor adventures for families.

www.wildernessinquiry.org

