Where you can earn a free master’s degree online.

Western Michigan University is seeking qualified students for the master’s hybrid online program in Special Adapted Physical Education. A federal grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education is available for qualified applicants. Students accepted will be granted free tuition and textbooks. Minorities are encouraged to apply. If interested, contact Jiabei Zhang at (269) 387-2949; zhangj@wmich.edu; Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008.

www.wmich.edu/coe/hper/special-adapted
Nutritional Interventions for Children and Adolescents With Visual Impairments

Obesity rates for persons with disabilities are significantly higher than those of the general population and may be even more so for individuals with visual impairments. One area of concern in particular is the nutritional habits and knowledge of children with visual impairments. The focus of this study was to investigate the effects of a nutritional program intervention centered on the nutritional knowledge of children and adolescents with visual impairments. Ultimately, there were three main goals: (a) to determine if nutritional knowledge increased, (b) to see the extent to which age affected the participants’ acquisition of knowledge, and (c) to find out the extent to which the level of visual impairment affected the participants’ acquisition of knowledge. Results of this study suggested the intervention increased the nutritional knowledge of the participants with visual impairments ages 8-17 years and at all levels of visual impairment. These findings may be of interest to APAQ readers as they offer further insight on alternative ways in which nutritional information may be introduced to students with visual impairments.


High School Teachers’ Beliefs About Teaching Students With Disabilities

There is increasing research on understanding how physical education teachers view, construct, and cope with inclusive programming issues. Physical education teachers vary greatly in their beliefs associated with the degree of easiness and difficulty they perceive in teaching students with disabilities. Armed with minimal coursework and professional development opportunities, these individuals possess many similar and contrasting feelings and thoughts questioning their ability to meet the education needs of those students with disabilities. The purpose of this study was to analyze high school physical education teachers’ beliefs about teaching students with disabilities in inclusive physical education environments. Results suggested participants believed teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive physical education setting was a very difficult and complex practice. Participants cited limited time, limited equipment, and limited support from administrators and other staff as primary areas of concern. The findings of this study may be of interest to APAQ readers as they offer further insight on teacher development related to physical education and the need for increased support and training in the inclusive setting.

Balance and Gait in Children With Visual and Hearing Impairments

This study compared the balance and gait patterns of 60 children aged 9-12, 20 with visual impairments, 20 with hearing impairments, and 20 that served as a control group. Standing Balance subtests of the Southern California Sensory Integrations Tests were used to assess balance and gait while the children’s feet were powdered and they walked along a dark platform. Results suggested that children with hearing impairments performed better on each of the balance and gait tests than children with visual impairments. Additionally, children with hearing impairments performed better than the control group on balance on right and left leg with eyes both open and closed as well as right and left foot angles. Children with visual impairments had a tendency to rotate their feet externally when attempting to balance. Researchers interested in the motor development of children with visual and hearing impairments might enjoy this article.


Top-Down vs. Bottom-up Processes: Visual Attention, Motor Responses, and Autism

The researchers investigated top-down and bottom-up processes in visual attention and motor responses of youth with autism. Seventeen individuals with autism were one of five groups that participated in the study and completed two baseline reaction time and top-down tasks as well as a gap effect and bottom-up task. The first tasks assessed direct reaction time in which the participants were required to quickly indicate the direction of the moved target and determine the location in which two stimuli (separated) had moved, causing a gaze shift. The second task was stimulus driven in which a fixated stimulus was centrally located on a screen, while two imperative stimuli were located on the outer borders of the screen. Results indicate that youth with autism did not have any response deficit in reaction time but did show slower overall reaction time in comparison to their peers without autism. Furthermore, youth with autism showed a larger gap effect in comparison to peers without autism, indicating the need for perceived greater relative salience of new visual stimuli in order to gain the visual attention desired.


Social Participation Factors in Youth With Cerebral Palsy

In this descriptive study, the researchers illustrated how youth with cerebral palsy (CP) lack participation in social-based activities. This investigation attempted to identify various determinants of the social participation of youth with CP through analyzing 209 adolescents/young adults and their parents who had an association with one of six Shriners’ Hospitals for Children located across the United States. In using various measuring instruments such as the Children’s Assessment of
Participation in Leisure and Recreational Activities, the Coping Inventory, the Pediatric Outcome Data Collection Instrument, and the Measures of Processes of Care, along with a host of questionnaires, it was found that a variety of determinants (e.g., competence in movement activities, communication, regular educational programs vs. special educational programs, and parental education) contributed toward youth with CP and their social participation. It was suggested that through incorporating strategies (e.g., goals setting) and appropriate instruction, youth with CP can improve their skills (e.g., physical, communication) needed to participate in social activities with friends, family and individuals who are not family members.


Content Analysis of Cultural Diversity in AASP

Researchers are expected to include and evaluate cultural diversity issues within their fields of study, including disability. The authors of this study evaluated the 5214 Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) conference abstracts from 1986 to 2007 since AASP ethical guidelines try to promote cultural diversity and multiculturalism within the field. Abstracts were evaluated on (a) the inclusion of a diverse sample, (b) a discussion of a diversity issue, and (c) country and gender of the first author of the abstract. Within these categories, disability was one of the cultural diversity categories. Overall, 10.5% of the abstracts evaluated included discussion of a cultural diversity issue and 31.9% included a diverse sample. Disability issues were discussed in 36 abstracts (.6%) with the largest number of abstracts written in 1986-1991. The authors discussed the continual need for diversity issues to be address within research especially in the field of sport and exercise psychology.


Motor Coordination in Autism Spectrum Disorders

The purpose of the systematic review and meta-analysis was to determine the degree of motor deficits of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) across fundamental behaviors of motor performance. Database searches identified 83 ASD studies that focused on motor coordination, arm movements, gait, or postural stability deficits. Data extraction involved between-group comparisons for ASD and typically developing controls (N = 51). Rigorous meta-analysis techniques including random effects models, forest and funnel plots, I^2, publication bias, fail-safe analysis, and moderator variable analyses determined a significant standardized mean difference effect equal to 1.20 (SE = 0.144; p < 0.0001; Z = 10.49). This large effect indicated substantial motor coordination deficits in the ASD groups across a wide range of behaviors. A modest reduction in effect size was observed with increasing age. Authors concluded that ASD is associated with significant and widespread alterations in motor performance and that motor impairments observed in individuals diagnosed with autism are greater than those impairments found in
children with Asperger syndrome or another ASD. This abstract would particularly be of interest to researchers with specialization in Motor Control of children with developmental disabilities.


**Digest edited by Kristi Sayers Menear**

**Digest Compilers:**
Daniel W. Tindall, University of Limerick, Ireland
K.M. Casebolt, East Stroudsburg University
ZáNean McClain, California State University, East Bay
Aaron Moffett, California State University, San Bernardino
Iva Obrusnikova, University of Delaware, Newark