

Physical Education and Visual Impairment: Collaborative Communication for Effective Inclusion

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Practice Perspective is to share three forms to help physical education teachers gather information from teachers of students with visual impairments and O&M specialists. Teachers of visually impairment students and O&M specialists complete the Functional Vision Information for Physical Education Settings form (Figure 1), which is intended to provide physical education teachers with valuable resources for the school year.

FULL TEXT

Students with visual impairments need access to differentiated, inclusive opportunities for physical education. Research has demonstrated that significant improvements in motor activity and balance are possible for these students through training (Aki, Turan, & Kayihan, 2007; Jazi, Purrajabi, Movahedi, & Jalali, 2012). Unfortunately, physical education teachers have reported that they face challenges in working with visually impaired students, due to the lack of specific information regarding how such students learn and how to effectively differentiate lessons (Conroy, 2012).

Lieberman, Haegele, Columna, and Conroy (2014) noted that teachers of visually impaired students and certified orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists can help with many aspects of physical education, since there are several components of the expanded core curriculum that can be learned through physical education. To address the gap between physical education teachers' interest in supporting students and their ability to do so effectively, we have developed three forms for physical education teachers, teachers of visually impaired students, and O&M specialists to use throughout the school year. The focus of the forms is on helping physical education teachers understand and maximize students' functional vision during classes.

When selecting teaching strategies and materials to be used in physical education classes, the teacher may ask: What is the most suitable surface type (brightness, color, contrast) for the visual needs of the student? At what distance is the student able to identify the approach of a moving ball? Is the lighting of the sports environment ideal for the student's visual condition? Where (which side, distance, height) should the physical education teacher, paraeducator, or peer provide visual stimulation (visual demonstration or materials)? These are common questions among physical education teachers who have students with visual impairments included in their classes. The purpose of this Practice Perspective is to share three forms to help physical education teachers gather information from teachers of students with visual impairments and O&M specialists. The result of this collaboration may improve opportunities in physical education for children with visual impairments.

The concepts students need to learn in O&M lessons should stem from the skills that the physical education teacher has identified as abilities students need to learn. For example, if the upcoming unit is volleyball, the student will need to know how to recognize the six basic positions on the court; how to move right, left, and

clockwise to rotate positions; and how to respond to directions from the teacher about positioning. The teacher might orient the student to the size and shape of the court; the placement of the net; and the placement of each position relative to the net, front, and back of the court. The teacher of visually impaired students may consider adding rope taped to the boundaries of the court, or adding bright tape to the floor or top and bottom of the net. If the student and physical education teacher are unfamiliar to the teacher of visually impaired students at the beginning of the year, the latter may attend several physical education classes with the student, observing and supporting him or her. Teachers of visually impairment students and O&M specialists complete the Functional Vision Information for Physical Education Settings form (Figure 1), which is intended to provide physical education teachers with valuable resources for the school year.

The Update on Equipment and Modifications form (Figure 2) can be exchanged between the physical education teacher and the teacher of visually impairment students several times throughout the year. The form is designed so that the white columns are completed by the physical education teacher and the shaded ones are completed by the teacher of visually impaired students. In the best case scenario, the teacher of visually impaired students has information in advance of instruction so that O&M instructions can include preteaching to allow the student to be well prepared for upcoming units (Conroy, 2012; Lieberman et al., 2014).

DETAILS

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