



Parent Perspectives on the Effects of an Adapted Dance Program on Social Participation and Engagement in Children with Disabilities Ages 5 to 12

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Introduction

- Children with disabilities often have reduced engagement and fewer social opportunities (Tindall et al., 2017).
- Dance is a highly engaging, social activity with positive psychosocial and emotional benefits for children with developmental disorders (Bégel et al., 2022).
- Dance also supports improvements in motor and cognitive functions for a variety of conditions such as stroke and neurodevelopmental disorders (Bégel et al., 2022).
- Adapted dance can improve quality of life and social competence among children with disabilities.
- Understanding parent perspectives is crucial for building effective programs.

Purpose

- To investigate the parent perspectives on how an adapted dance program affects social experiences in children ages 5 to 12 with disabilities.

Methods

- Participants were parents of children (ages 5-12) in the Adapted Learning, Movement-to-Music Class at The Dance Foundation in Homewood, AL.
- After consent, parents completed a demographic form and two surveys on their child's participation in dance and other activities.
- Surveys were repeated after the 6-week dance session.

Surveys

- Parent Perception of Physical Activity Scale (modified; Lakes et al., 2019)
 - 25 questions, 4-point Likert scale (1= strongly agree to 4= strongly agree)
 - 3 subscales: Benefits, Barriers, and Parental Influence
- Child Participation Questionnaire – Social Participation subscale (Rosenburg et al., 2010)
 - 9 questions with 6-point Likert scales
 - Subsets measuring frequency of participation, degree of assistance, child's pleasure, and parental satisfaction
- Surveys were scored and means were computed for each time point. A paired t-test was used to compare pre/post scores.



Results

Demographics

- Nine 9 parents reported on 10 children in the Adapted learning class.
- Ten parents completed pre-surveys; one did not complete post-surveys and was excluded.
- Parents: ages 34 to 56 years ($x = 40 \pm 7.4$); 8 mothers, 1 father; 8 Caucasian, 1 Caucasian/Mixed.
- Children: ages 5 to 12 years ($x = 8 \pm 1.9$); 7 girls, 3 boys.
- Primary diagnoses: Autism, Down syndrome, and ADHD; others included achondroplasia, spina bifida, and cerebral palsy.
- 80% of children participated in other physical activities outside of dance.

Table 1. Survey results before and after the 6-week dance session.

	Pre-Test, Mean (SD)	Post- Test, Mean (SD)
Parent Perception of Physical Activity Questionnaire		
Benefits of Physical Activity	3.6 (0.3)	3.6 (0.4)
Barriers to Physical Activity	1.6 (0.4)	1.5 (0.3)
Parental Influence on Physical Activity	3.6 (0.4)	3.5 (0.5)
Child Participation Questionnaire		
Frequency of Participation	1.9 (0.3)	1.8 (0.5)
Assistance Needed	2.9 (1.0)	3.1 (0.9)
Child's Pleasure	4.1 (0.8)	4.5 (1.0)
Parental Satisfaction	4.4 (0.7)	5.1 (0.7) *

* Significant difference at $p < 0.5$

Discussion

Satisfaction of Social Participation

- Parent satisfaction with children's social participation increased after the 6-week session.
- No significant changes were found in other survey subscales.

Perceptions of Physical Activity

- Parents already viewed physical activity as beneficial at baseline.
- Parents did not report increased barriers to physical activity.

Community Participation

- Most children participated in other physical activity outside of adapted dance.
- Participation did not increase during the study.
- Many rarely took part in the social activities listed in the survey.

Limitations

- Small sample size; Single-site sample (The Dance Foundation).
- Eight children had prior experience (4+ sessions) with the program.
- Some children were unable to attend all classes during the session.

Conclusion

Implications

- Occupational therapists can steward engagement and social participation among other skills by incorporating dance into their practice.
- Movement based strategies can be used in practice to regulate sensory systems as they often are already.
- Adapted dance concepts could be implemented as a group therapy approach.
- The results from this study may encourage parents to incorporate dance and other movement into their child's life.
- Teachers can use this information to incorporate movement break opportunities into their classrooms as well.

Future Research

- Future research would focus on surveying only parents who have children who are new to the adapted dance program.
- A similar structured study could be conducted with the adapted dance class for children and teens ages 10-15.
- Parents of children who participate in other Movement to Music classes outside of the adapted program could be surveyed.
- Expand the research to programs at other dance studios to compare different programs and increase the study size.

References

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