



# 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)
<b>Parent Perception of Physical Activity Questionnaire</b>		
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)
<b>Child Participation Questionnaire</b>		
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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