



Emerging Minds: Unveiling Dr. McNamara's Work

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Special Education

Includes

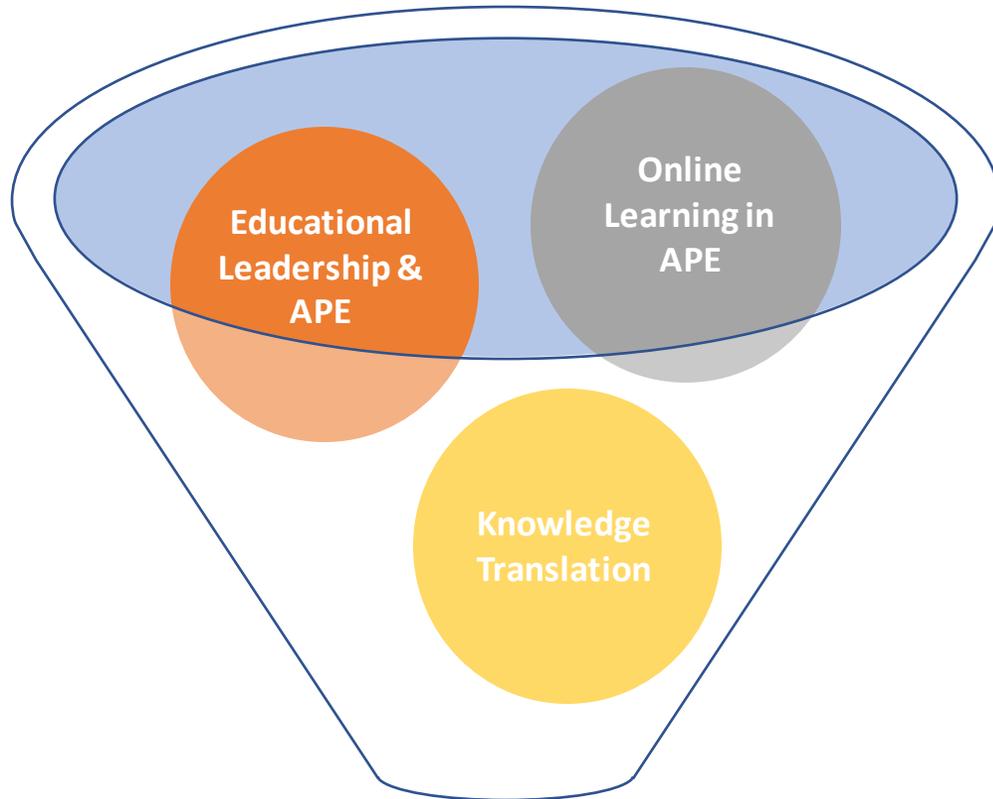
(Adapted) Physical
Education



MY PRIMARY
RESEARCH FOCUS



Research Areas



Develop Accessible Dissemination Strategies to Promote Knowledge & Attitudes among Key Stakeholders about APE

Online Learning Tools & APE

- Examine the use & impact of online tools, such as social media & podcasts, to inform and changes attitudes related to APE in school administrators, pre-service physical educators, and in-service adapted physical educators

Educational Leadership & APE

- Examine how school administrators impact adapted physical educators' professional experiences and teaching practices

Knowledge Translation & APE

- Examine general populations' understanding of APE and identify evidence-based strategies to market APE to larger audiences

STATUS AND PERSPECTIVES OF APE IN NEW ENGLAAND



BACKGROUND

- **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) requires students with disabilities receive specially designed physical education (PE), often referred to as APE, when deemed necessary.**
- **Recent research indicates that APE teachers and services are often marginalized within the greater school culture, leading to poor quality services and less resources for APE and disabled students (e.g., McNamara et al., in press).**
- **Several key stakeholders' perspectives and values associated with APE present barriers to these services for disabled students (e.g., Haegele et al., 2020; McNamara et al., in press).**

Purpose

- **Parents, teachers, and school administrators play an important role in setting the tone for how PE and APE are valued and prioritized in schools, effecting the support and allocation of resources to support these services; yet little research has focused on how the awareness and perspectives of these groups regarding APE**
- **Hence, my research team and I conducted two recent studies to examine their perspectives and values of APE, specifically we:**
 - (1) Surveyed parents, administrators, and PE teachers on their awareness and perspectives of APE**
 - (2) Interviewed parents, administrators, and PE teachers on their perspectives and values towards APE**

Study #1

60 Parents, 80 Physical Educators, and 25 School Administrators completed an APE awareness survey.

	Parent	PE Teacher	School Admin
APE Utilization			
Has child/students who receive APE	48.3%	62.5%	52.0%
(if yes) APE documented on any student IEP	86.2%	53.5%	76.9%
(if yes) Freq, duration, location of APE on IEP	76.0%	-	-
(if has student with IEP) Participates in writing IEP goals	-	63.8%	-
(if has child/student with IEP) Specific goals related to physical education documented on IEP	76.0%	92.1%	100%

	Parents	School Admins	PE Teacher
PE is an important academic subject			
Percent disagree (1,2,3)	3.5%	0.0%	7.5%
Percent neutral (4)	8.6%	4.0%	15.0%
Percent agree (5,6,7)	87.9%	96.0%	77.5%
My child/students receive qual PE services that meet his/her unique needs			
Percent disagree (1,2,3)	29.3%	16.0%	12.5%
Percent neutral (4)	10.3%	16.0%	18.8%
Percent agree (5,6,7)	60.3%	68.0%	68.8%
To what degree do you believe your child's/students' PE teachers are prepared to deliver APE			
Percent Unprepared (1,2,3)	25.9%	16.0%	13.9%
Percent neutral (4)	17.2%	12.0%	24.1%
Percent Prepared (5,6,7)	56.9%	72.0%	62.0%

Study #1: Group & APE Provision Differences

Parents who disagreed with the statement that their child “receives quality PE services that meet their unique needs” were significantly higher than other groups.

Participants in schools with APE services significantly agreed more with the following statement: “I feel that my child/students are receiving quality PE services that meet their unique needs”

Participants who were in schools with APE services significantly agreed more with the following statement: “To what degree do you believe your child's/students' PE teachers are prepared to deliver APE”

Study #2

We conducted a qualitative inquiry rooted within a critical-ableism perspective and through interpretivist lens to explore various special education provision stakeholders' experiences and perspectives around PE and APE.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 physical educators, 9 parents, and 2 school admins in New England region.

We employed a reflexive thematic analysis to develop open and axial codes.

To enhance the analysis rigor, we maintained a thorough audit trail, took and used reflexive notes during the data collection and analysis process, and conferred with a critical friend to aid with the interpretation process.

Study #2

Results

Four themes were constructed through the analysis:

(1) Disability is something to ignore, as we don't want them [disabled children] to feel bad

(2) Who cares about APE, it's just for disabled kiddos

(3) Presence as inclusion: Unintentional marginalization in PE

(4) PE for my child was a nightmare

Disability is something to ignore, as we don't want them [disabled children] to feel bad

Sometimes it can feel patronizing. I hate that singsong voice when people talk to people who are disabled, it's like yelling at the person who doesn't speak English. (PE Teacher #1)

We've been lucky, we've never had a deaf student, we've never had a blind student. (PE Teacher #2)

I think the teachers care about the (disabled) students as they're nice teachers, but I don't think they value them as valuable members of the school. They don't have high expectations (for them). (Parent #2)

Who cares about APE, it's just for disabled kiddos

I don't think there's a real understanding of it (APE) in some places about what it should look like (Parent #2)

To be honest, I don't know anything about PE, so I have no expertise to offer them, or I don't have a lot to contribute. I sort of let them do what they think is best and let them have it. (Admin #1)

It was definitely frustrating because you invest all this time and effort and you specify, like I've built up this program here... and they (the school board) were just going to be like, Oh, it's not important...liquidate it. (Teacher #2)

Presence as inclusion: Unintentional marginalization in PE

I pulled her out of the high school because I didn't like the lack of inclusion. (Parent #1)

The (non-disabled) peers just stand off to the side on their phones (during class). (Parent #1)

They should not be on the sidelines... they shouldn't be participating in what all the other students are participating, they might be modified and look a little bit different, but that's what they should be doing. (Parent #3)

PE is a Nightmare

She would start to cry. She stopped talking about it (PE). She wouldn't go to (the) chorus concert in the gym. She wouldn't go to the dances in the gym. she'd sit outside the gym. She didn't say anything (and) she behaved differently... She still is hesitant to go into a gym. (Parent #12)

When I see Duck, Duck, Goose written down, I really question what their level of qualification to be teaching the classes... Do they know anything about autism? Do they know anything about someone who might be in a wheelchair or different physical disabilities, as well as emotional or, or neurological disabilities. (Parent #1)



Implications

These studies highlight:

- (1) A general lack of knowledge and value towards APE, and thus disabled students,**
- (2) If you have APE services, you are more likely to value it**
- (3) PE services for disabled kids is often underwhelming, if not harmful**

To provide disabled students higher quality services, we must begin to effectively advocate and educate others about APE and high-quality service delivery.

Future research is needed to better understand:

- The extent of APE knowledge needed for each group to properly advocate and provide resources to APE services,**
- Effective strategies APE teachers can employ to navigate these complex relationships, and**
- Interventions (e.g., online learning tools) to effectively educate key stakeholders' perceptions of APE.**

Questions?

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