

INCLUSION IN SPORT EDUCATION: VOICES AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS  
WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES AND TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

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## ABSTRACT

Sport Education has been suggested as an appropriate curriculum model to provide an environment conducive to accommodate many students at one time. The present study explored this notion, investigating (a) students without disabilities' conceptions and experiences of participating in a season of Sport Education alongside students with disabilities, (b) voices of students with disabilities regarding their perceptions and experiences of participation in a season of Sport Education, and (c) middle school physical education teachers' perceptions of using the Sport Education curriculum model to include students with disabilities in the general physical education classroom.

Participants included 66 seventh grade students, including four students with intellectual and behavioral disabilities, participating in a flag football Sport Education season. Data collection methods comprised formal and informal interviews, focus group interviews, field notes, observations with field notes, critical incident reports and self-reflective journals for teachers. In addition, all lessons were videotaped.

Through a Contact Theory framework, the results for students without disabilities showed Sport Education provided enjoyable participation among students, gave students learning ownership, and provided positive experiences with students with disabilities. Five sub-themes aided understanding these students' experiences: a sense of inclusion, perceptions of equality, a climate of assisting others, modifications to the activities, and a greater understanding of students with disabilities. Findings indicated students with disabilities felt they were socially accepted, participated in a student-centered learning environment, had assistance in learning, and perceived

responsibilities and participation. Sport Education allowed students with disabilities to take ownership in learning alongside their peers by working in small groups, getting to know other students, and participating in physical education more meaningfully.

The Theory of Planned Behavior was used to explore the three physical education teachers' perceptions of using the Sport Education curriculum model to include students with disabilities. Findings indicated that this inclusion is more likely when teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusion. Recognizing a significant amount of a priori planning occurs, teachers also perceived successful inclusion of students with disabilities happens when it promotes a sense of belonging among all students and allows students with disabilities to fulfill meaningful responsibilities during the course of Sport Education.

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## CHAPTER I

### STUDENTS WITHOUT DISABILITIES' CONCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN A SEASON OF SPORT EDUCATION

#### **Abstract**

The purpose of the study was to investigate students without disabilities' conceptions and experiences of participating in a season of Sport Education alongside students with disabilities. The participants of the study were 12- and 13-year-old students without disabilities who participated in a flag football season of Sport Education. The research was approved by the school's administrator, the assistant superintendent of instruction, and the author's institutional review board. Students without disabilities involved in the study provided assent to participate; as well a consent form was obtained from all participants' parents or legal guardians prior to the beginning of data collection. The results showed that the curriculum model provided enjoyable participation among all students, roles in Sport Education gave all students ownership in their learning, and experiences with students with disabilities were positive. In describing the last theme, there were five sub-themes that aided in our understanding of students without disabilities experiences. These five sub-themes were: a sense of inclusion, perceptions of equality, a climate of assisting others, modifications to the activities, and a greater understanding of students with disabilities.

*Keywords:* inclusion, sport education, students without disabilities, perceptions

## **Students without Disabilities' Conceptions and Experiences of Including Students with Disabilities in a Season of Sport Education**

Integration of students with disabilities into general physical education has helped to create support for the inclusion process (Rouse, 2009). It has provided a bridge for educators, administrators, parents, and students to become more aware of the needs of all students in more ways than just academics. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) states that physical education is required for all children between the ages of 3 and 21 that require special education services because of a specific disability or developmental delay (IDEIA, 2004). Students with disabilities are entitled to free, appropriate physical education (physical education) that is equal to that of their non-disabled peers. Not only does inclusion give students with disabilities the opportunity to participate with their peers, but it also creates positive attitudes within students without disabilities regarding their experiences in participating with students with disabilities (Slininger, Sherrill, & Jankowski, 2000). It also helps create awareness regarding disabilities in the sense that students with disabilities are actually more able than disabled (Foley, Tindall, Lieberman, & Kim, 2007). Inclusion aids in forming a social construct that allows all students to develop friendships that they may otherwise not have had (Seymour, Reid, & Bloom, 2009).

The impact of inclusion in the general physical education setting is determined greatly by the environment created by the teacher (Lieberman, James, & Ludwa, 2004). Students without disabilities come to physical education class ready to participate in sport or activity with their peers. When students with disabilities are included in the activity, appropriate modifications must be made in order to allow all students to participate in an equitable fashion. Most students find these modifications enjoyable and are in favor of using modified games when learning a new skill or activity (Kalyvas & Reid, 2003). However, if the activity becomes less challenging

for students without disabilities, they may begin to lose interest (Bunch & Valeo, 2004; Eminovic, Nikic, Stojkovic, & Pacic, 2009). With inclusion being a part of the general education program, teachers must be able to provide opportunities for all students to participate side by side in a way that will eliminate negative experiences that might arise (James, Kellman, & Lieberman, 2011).

The perspectives of all stakeholders in the inclusion processes have been of increasing interest to researchers. Initial research centered on perspectives of administration (Sherrill, 1984), parents (Yssel, Engelbrecht, Magdalena, Eloff, & Swart, 2007), teachers (Hardin, 2005), pre-service teachers and their educational preparation, training, attitudes, and experiences within the framework of inclusion (Hodge & Jansma, 1999; Rust & Sinelnikov, 2010). Recently scholars have turned their attention toward the perspectives of students without disabilities with regard to the integration of students with disabilities (Obrusnikova, Valkova, & Block, 2003; Kalyvas & Reid, 2003). Relative to the perspectives of students with disabilities, Klingner and Vaughn (1999) found an emerging body of literature that seemed to focus on two distinct areas: (a) students' perceptions of instructional processes in inclusive settings and (b) students' attitudinal indices toward students with disabilities. Their cross-study analysis of 20 studies that investigated students' perceptions of instructional procedures in the general education classroom revealed that students with and without disabilities want to be treated equally with respect to their activities, books, homework, grading criteria, and grouping practices.

A number of researchers have suggested that students without disabilities generally demonstrate positive attitudes toward their peers with disabilities (Block & Zeman, 1996; Bunch & Valeo, 2004; Kalyvas & Reid, 2003; Tripp, French, & Sherrill, 1995). However, Obrusnikova and Dillon (2011) brought to light the challenges faced by students without disabilities that seem

to bear a negative response to the subject. These challenges seem to be evident when proper supports are not incorporated into the general physical education classroom (i.e., adapted equipment, teaching assistants, and adapted physical educators). When students with disabilities are included in the general physical education class with no supports, the teacher may struggle to meet the needs of all students which then creates an unpleasant environment for all involved (Block, 1995; Block & Krebs, 1992; Lavay & Depaepe, 1987). Students with and without disabilities have been shown to improve in attitude toward inclusion and motor skill acquisition with proper support (Block & Zeman, 1996; Crouch, Ward, & Patrick, 1997).

### **Sport Education and Students with Disabilities**

In the past decade, one pedagogical model, Sport Education (Sport Education), has received particularly favorable responses from teachers and students (Seidentop, Hastie & van der Mars, 2011) and has recently been postulated by some scholars to have a real potential of providing meaningful sporting experiences to students with disabilities (Fittipaldi-Wert, Brock, Hastie, Arnold, & Guarino, 2009; Foley et al., 2007; Lieberman et al., 2004; Tindall & Foley, 2011). This pedagogical model is intended to create a learning environment for which students take ownership of their learning and participation while providing authentic and contextualized sporting experience during regular physical education. With six definitive characteristics, the goal of Sport Education is for students to become competent, literate, and enthusiastic sportspersons (Seidentop et al., 2011).

Within the structure of Sport Education, modified games are organized into seasons lasting longer than a traditional physical education unit which allow the teacher to give more in-depth instruction and the students to learn all aspects of the activity. Affiliation with a specific team for the duration of the season allows students to participate in skill training, most often led

by the students themselves, and formal competition. Throughout the season, the students take part in recordkeeping in order to show improvement and for goal setting, while creating team names, shirts, and banners emphasizes the festive nature of the sport or activity. Moreover, in Sport Education, students are involved in the planning, instruction, organization, implementation, and execution of the activities (Siedentop et al., 2011). This gives all students the opportunity to learn the value of cooperation in all roles that are involved with an activity/sport.

Since its inception, there has been much research on Sport Education with early findings comprehensively summarized by Wallhead and O'Sullivan (2005) and more recently by Hastie, de Ojeda, and Luquin (2011). The previous research has been favorable and demonstrated students' improvement of fitness (Hastie, Sluder, Buchanan & Wadsworth, 2009; Hastie & Trost, 2002), skill development, game play, and tactical awareness (Browne, Carlson, & Hastie, 2004; Carlson & Hastie, 2004; Hastie & Curtner-Smith, 2006; Hastie, Sinelnikov & Guarino, 2009; Pritchard, Hawkins, Wiegand, & Metzler, 2008), personal/social development and attitudes (Brock, Rovegno & Oliver, 2009; Kinchin, Wardle, Roderick & Sprosen, 2004; MacPhail & Kinchin, 2004; Pill, 2010), and last, values like equity, affinity, and culture (Mowling, Brock & Hastie, 2006; Siedentop et al., 2011; Vidoni & Ward, 2009).

Sport Education is cast as a pedagogical model that is flexible and open to adaptations (Siedentop et al, 2011) which seem to fit well with the nature of modifications and adaptations necessary for full and meaningful participation of students with disabilities and students without disabilities. Moreover, some scholars argue that instructional models can be modified suggesting that "if rules and equipment can be adapted to fit students' needs, so can instructional models"

(Pressé, Block, Horton, & Harvey 2011, p. 32). This assumption, however, has not been empirically tested, especially in the case of Sport Education.

What is clear, however, is that with the student-driven nature of the instructional model, Sport Education allows for processes of learning and teaching to occur between and among the participants, a concept known as peer tutoring. Using trained peer tutors has shown to help students with disabilities improve motor performance (Houston-Wilson, Dunn, van der Mars, & McCubbin, 1997; Johnson & Ward, 2001) and increase social development by encouraging positive relationships (Sinibaldi, 2001). Peer-tutors in an inclusive setting can potentially give students with disabilities a role model that can help motivate them and get them into the action (Klavina & Block, 2008; Lieberman & Houston-Wilson, 2002). Sport Education promotes personal development by giving all students a role such as coach, scorekeeper, official, or other that is essential for the season to progress (Lieberman et al., 2004) and these roles and responsibilities engage students with disabilities. In fact, “special needs students displayed unprecedented application to work within their roles in Sport Education” (Siedentop et al., 2011, p. 23).

In 2009, Fittipaldi-Wert and her colleagues implemented Sport Education for 28 students with visual impairment. These students attended a 1-week sports camp for children who are blind, deaf-blind, or had multiple disabilities. The goal of the camp was to give empowerment to students by providing “an opportunity to learn how to be physically active members of society” (Fittipaldi-Wert et al., 2009, p. 7). The outcome of the study showed a 69% increase of students’ perceptions of sports knowledge and abilities, a 14% increase in enjoyment and participation, and a 30% increase in team affiliation.

It is important to note that if a student with disabilities is not able to perform the necessary skills or assigned responsibility, students work together with the teacher to find a way so all students can learn the skill. Students seem to be more supportive of each other when all students are able to perform necessary skills for participation in order help the team achieve success (Pill, 2010). Sport Education shows students of all abilities the importance of real-life situations so that through the learning of skills and strategy, students experience empowerment through participation in physical activity (Hutzler, Fliess, Chacham, & Auweele, 2002).

### **Purpose of the Study**

While there is emerging research (Fittipaldi-Wert et al., 2009) and anecdotal evidence (Foley et al., 2007) of students with disabilities' experiences of participation in Sport Education, there has been no empirical research examining students without disabilities' experiences alongside students with disabilities. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to investigate students without disabilities' conceptions and experiences of participating in a season of Sport Education alongside students with disabilities.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study gained insight using Contact Theory (CT) which states that interaction between individuals who differ from the majority will experience some type of discrimination until all individuals are familiar with each other. Allport (1954) posited that positive intergroup contact can be obtained only when four conditions are met: (a) there is equal status within the situation. Some believe that students with disabilities who are included full-time into general education classes experience equal status more frequently than students with disabilities who are included only part-time (Schnorr, 1990). (b) The group as a whole must agree to the equality. (c) Individuals must agree in the common purpose. Achievement of common goals must be

supported by everyone without competition against each other (Bettencourt, Brewer, Rogers-Croak & Miller, 1992), and (d) the agreement must be genuine (Allport, 1954). In order for positive attitudes to be formed, contact must be intentional rather than forced (Pettigrew, 1998). The more cooperative interaction individuals have with each other, the more potential exists for a positive relationship to emerge (Fishbein, 1996).

The environment in which the contact is made plays a large role in how attitudes are formed (Allport, 1954 Tripp et al., 1995). More “favorable” conditions tend to produce positive attitudes among groups of individuals. Conversely, “unfavorable” environments tend to lead to more negative attitudes. If individuals are always in a competitive situation among each other that is not modified to be equitable for all, this may impede students without disabilities from forming positive attitudes toward students with disabilities (Tripp et al., 1995). As well, understanding between the groups might be difficult when students are only included in the physical education setting but not in the general education setting too.

## **Methods**

### **Setting and Participants**

The middle school (sixth through eighth grades) in which the study took place is located in a small town in the southeastern region of the United States. It has a total enrollment of over 800 students of which 15% are eligible for free or reduced lunches. The population of the school is a mixture of African-American, Hispanic, and Caucasian students and faculty. The physical education curriculum in the school is a combination of what is generally referred to as the Multi-activity model (Siedentop et al., 1986) and Sport Education.

Sixty-two seventh grade students without disabilities (aged 12-13) who were enrolled in general physical education took part in the study. There were four students who had intellectual

and/or behavioral disabilities in this class. The participants took part in a flag football season of Sport Education and were either (a) members of the same team as students with disabilities or (b) members of opposing teams. The research was approved by the school's administrator, the assistant superintendent of instruction, and the author's institutional review board (see Appendix A). Students without disabilities involved in the study provided assent to participate. Additionally, a consent form was obtained from all participants' parents or legal guardians prior to the beginning of data collection (see Appendices B-E).

### **Lesson Content and Model Fidelity**

The students participated in a season designed and taught according to the key principals of Sport Education. The students were divided into teams that remained intact throughout the season. The preseason activities were to engage in skill practice to develop foundational skills and tactics. In the second part of the season, teams played in non-consequence practice games where they rotated among other teams in order to learn strategy and sportsmanship. The culminating event was a formal competition that ended the season with an awards ceremony. The student roles consisted of coaches, equipment managers, warm-up leaders, scorekeepers, and statisticians (Siedentop et al., 2011). Model fidelity validation followed the procedures recommended by Sinelnikov (2009) which included the comparisons being made between the planned and observed Sport Education-specific teacher pedagogical behaviors that occurred during the season (see Table 1). The teachers planned for and implemented 21 out of 23 (91.3%) benchmark elements of the Sport Education season which demonstrates high treatment fidelity.

Table 1.

*Demonstration of Sport Education Pedagogical Behaviors*

	<b>Benchmark Element</b>	<b>Planned</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Teacher plans unit around the principle of a <b>season</b>	Management/Organizational phase	√	√
	Team Selection Phase	√	√
	Pre-season scrimmage phase	√	√
	Regular season phase	√	√
	End of season event	√	√
	Students involved in the process of team selection	√	√
Teacher promotes the <b>affiliation</b> concept	Persisting teams for duration of unit	√	√
	Teams are easily identifiable	√	√
	Incorporates student duty roles within lessons	√	√
Teacher promotes students taking <b>responsibility</b>	Establishes contract and/or accountability for student performance in roles	X	X
	Teacher holds student accountable	√	√
	Teacher provides training for referees	X	X
	Teacher utilizes tasks to train students on effective verbal communication and feedback	√	√
	Teacher provides task sheets for coaches/captains	√	√
	Teacher adopts a facilitator approach during interactions with student groups	√	√
	Teacher encourages students to resolve conflict within groups	√	√
	A formal schedule of competition is established	√	√
Teacher uses <b>formal competition</b> within unit plan	Fair play and sportsman awards utilized	√	√
	Incorporates peer assessment as part of record keeping process	√	√
	Regular postings of team performance	√	√
	Culminating event is festive in nature	√	√
Teacher uses <b>culminating event</b>	Teacher emphasizes the celebration of fair play	√	√
Teacher uses <b>festivity</b> within unit	Teacher emphasizes the celebration of fair play	√	√

## **Data Collection**

Data collection took place in one physical education class over a 7-week period during which time the researcher was present 3 days a week for the flag football season. Data were collected by the researcher as a non-participant observer (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) and included direct observation with videotaping of all lessons, individual interviews, focus group interviews, and critical incident reports.

### **Direct Observation**

The researcher conducted observations of the Sport Education season and took detailed field notes documenting the activities and interactions witnessed during the class. In addition, all lessons of the season were videotaped. The cameras were unobtrusively positioned away from the activity to allow the entire research group to be videotaped in order to view interactions among all students during the activity. The intent and focus of direct observation were to note students without disabilities' interactions with students with disabilities or their avoidance of thereof before, during, and after participation.

### **Individual Formal and Informal Interviews**

Four 1-hour semi-structured interviews were conducted with randomly chosen participants prior to the beginning of the season. These interviews were used as the primary means to gain an understanding of students' a priori perceptions of participating with students with disabilities in their own words (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A semi-structured interview (see Appendix F) allowed for flexibility of questioning in order to gain more insight into the perceptions of the students (Patton, 1990). Additionally, over 100 informal interviews took place during the course of the season. These brief discussions provided further insight into students'

daily conceptions and experiences of participating alongside students with disabilities. All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed.

### **Focus Group Interviews**

Group interviews are preferable to individual interviews when commonly held beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are the focus of the study. Focus groups are used when a higher quality of information can be gained by the collective ideas of a group of individuals (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Focus group interviews have been used previously to examine students' perceptions and experiences of participating in Sport Education seasons (Sinelnikov & Hastie, 2010) as well as provide students the opportunity to collectively and confidently express their feelings of inclusion in the general physical education setting (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000).

Two focus group interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes were conducted just prior to the culminating event. There were 7 participants in one group and 10 in the other. Each focus group was comprised of a mixture of participants from different teams. The focus group format was intentionally chosen due to its potential to foster social support networks and help students open up when discussing certain topics (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

### **Critical Incident Reports**

The critical incident reports allowed students the opportunity to write down and reflect on significant events that occurred during a lesson (Flanagan, 1954). Additionally, it allowed students to express their thoughts and ideas that may not otherwise have been expressed during focus group discussions or individual interviews (Oliver, 1999)

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using analytic induction and constant comparison (Creswell, 2007; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). During phase 1 of analysis, transcripts of individual

interviews, focus groups, direct observations, and critical incident reports were read and re-read to identify data which revealed students' conceptions and experiences of participating in a season of Sport Education. Within phase 2, data revealing students without disabilities' experiences and conceptions of participating alongside students with disabilities were identified. All data were reduced to a series of codes from which categories and themes were later developed.

Credibility and trustworthiness of data were ensured by the researcher conducting a negative case analysis as well as frequently referring to the video evidence combined with field notes to support or dispute developed categories. The data were triangulated among five different data sources (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

## **Results**

A table describing the Sport Education season provides background information as to how the teachers administered the curriculum model. It provides an overview of weekly activities in which the students participated (see Table 2).

The following themes were identified: enjoyable participation in Sport Education, roles in Sport Education, and experiences with students with disabilities. In describing the last theme, there were five sub-themes that aided in our understanding of students without disabilities' experiences. These five sub-themes were a sense of inclusion, perceptions of equality, a climate of assisting others, modifications to the activities, and a greater understanding of students with disabilities.

Table 2

*Flag Football Sport Education Season*

Lessons	Phase of Season	Content
1-3	Pre-season	Team formation Name, mascot, poster Team Roles Coach, asst. coach, equipment manager,
4-6	Warm-up leader, statistician Pre-season	Teaching Positions, play design, fundamental skills Playbook creation Skill Practice
7-9	Pre-season	Teaching Defense, offense, team strategy Skill Practice Work on plays
10-15	Formal Competition	Pre-season tournament Mini games Team practice
16-20	Tournament Play	Seeded Tournament Team Practice
21	Culminating Event	Championship Game

**Enjoyable Participation in Sport Education**

Students with disabilities in this study enjoyed their participation in a flag football Sport Education season. Comments like, “yeah, it was fun” and “it was really fun” were commonly expressed during interviews, focus group interviews, and critical incidents. Since the sport chosen for Sport Education was flag football, some students, especially girls, did not anticipate their participation would be that enjoyable. For example, Allie said “surprisingly, it was fun” and Candice elaborated on that notion of “fun,” suggesting that the season became more enjoyable as students learned more about Sport Education stating, “normally, when you first start, you think it’s not going to be fun whatsoever but then when you learn how to do everything it got more fun.” For some students, the participation in the season was enjoyable because it challenged

them on multiple levels. Cognitively, it was challenging “because you had to make up plays and you had to memorize it” while from the psychomotor perspective “some of us had to actually learn how to pass and some had to learn how to catch.”

Other students suggested that part of the enjoyment was derived from the increased autonomy and shared responsibilities of the physical education lessons. Charles, speaking about the structure of Sport Education, stated, “I like this way. I think we get to play more when we are in control of my team more. I would like to do this [Sport Education] with more sports.” Another poignant example of students taking charge and student enjoyment was reflected in the field notes.

One team struggled during running and blocking for a specific route. The coach, realizing where the struggle was occurring, walked the team through the route so his team understood their responsibility. When the team ran it full speed and it worked, they all celebrated their success with high fives and cheers. (Field Notes, Lesson 6)

### **Roles in Sport Education**

Many students commented about their newfound responsibilities and roles they had for the season. They were able to articulate the roles saying that “we have a coach, trainer, equipment manager, and statistician,” as well as responsibilities that accompanied those roles. For example, speaking about coaches’ responsibilities of providing leadership when designing offensive plays, Chad said, “well, my . . . coach, like, will do examples . . . He will do it and show examples of the routes they are supposed to run and stuff.” Students seemed to take the responsibilities of each role very seriously and spent considerable amount of time and energy in making sure to fulfill their duties. As mentioned previously, a major responsibility for the role of a coach during skill practice phase of the Sport Education season was to design offensive plays. These offensive plays would then go into a team’s playbook and each team would then be allowed to practice designed plays.

Teams are working on playbooks today in their teams. All teams are sitting on the floor working together making their plays. Teachers taught them yesterday about designing plays and worked on positions. Teachers are walking around looking at plays, helping work through problems and diagrams. All teams are working; they sometimes get up and walk through a route. Teachers gave each team a set of colored poly spots to represent the different positions. For each play the team designs, they get up and place their spot on the floor to represent their place and then as the play is executed, each person takes their poly to their final position. When they are finally satisfied with how the play works, they draw it onto their playbook page. (Field Notes, Lesson 7)

As a result, the majority of these playbooks featured fairly sophisticated play designs. Figure 1 provides an example of offensive plays from one of the team's playbook. Students were expected by their coaches to learn these plays and teams practiced them "all the time" in preparation for game play.

Some students commented that some team roles and playing roles were more difficult than others but students demonstrated considerable amounts of effort in learning those roles. During one focus interview, Mary, with non-verbal agreement of others, stated that "being a statistician is hard" but "we tried hard." Other students commented on the considerable effort required to learn and play during the season. Students were asked to rotate playing positions during game play and being a quarterback "was hard" because "they have to be able to lead the team and actually know how to play football." Mary said that "learning the plays" was challenging, with James suggesting that part of the challenge was the imposed requirement by the teachers to switch positions after each offensive series saying, "if you switch positions, it's hard to know what you have to do."

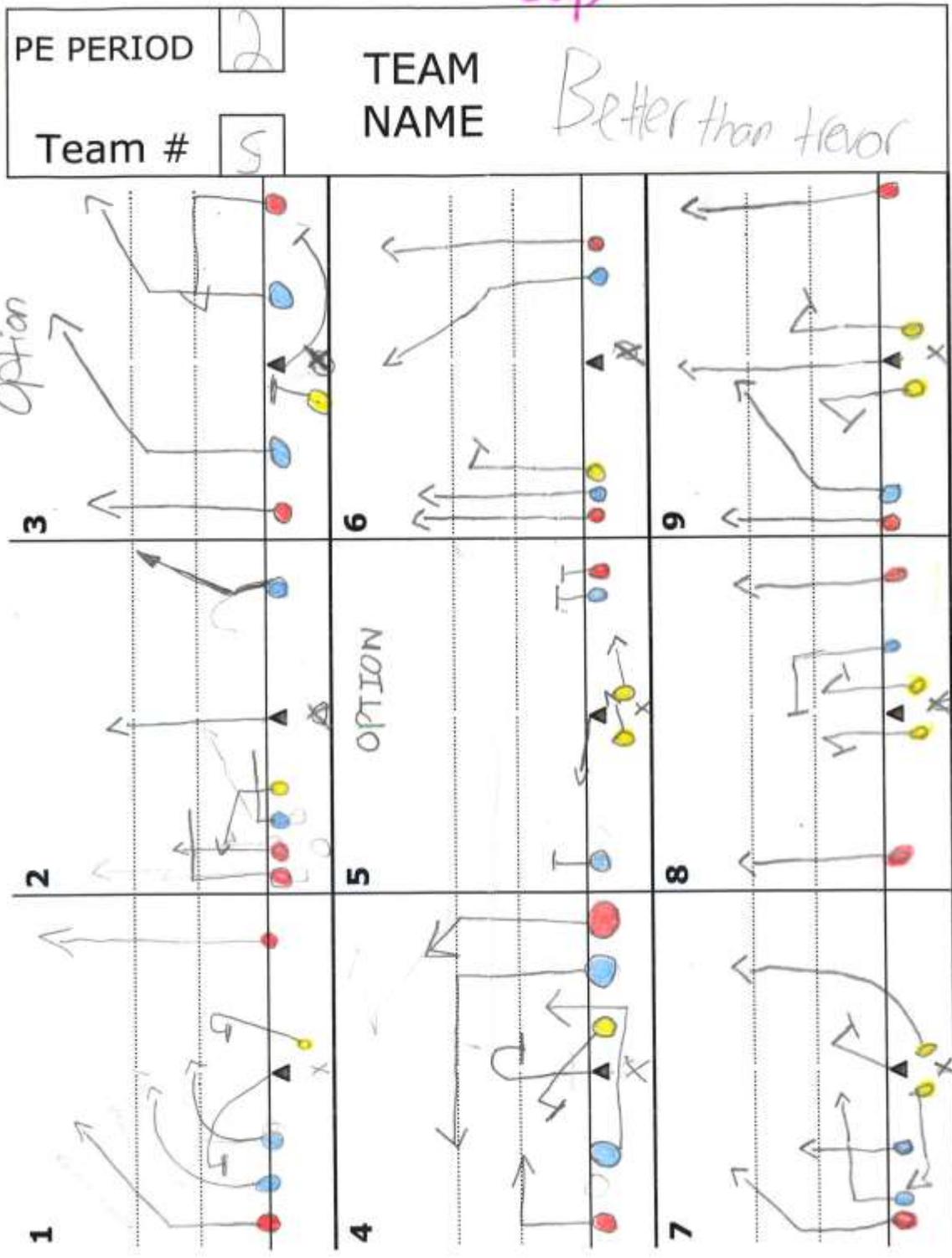


Figure 1. Team's "Better Than Trevor" offensive plays.

## **Experiences Alongside Students with Disabilities**

Following the analysis of data, a vivid picture of students without disabilities' experiences and perceptions of participating alongside students with disabilities in a season of Sport Education was evident. When describing their experiences, students without disabilities expressed notions of the importance of perceptions of equality, a sense of inclusion in a gym, an environment of assisting others, providing accommodations and modifications, greater understanding of students with disabilities and, as a result, greater enjoyment of working with students with disabilities.

**A sense of inclusion.** When discussing how students without disabilities perceive participation of students with disabilities, most students suggested that students with disabilities “are fully included” in their Sport Education season. In fact, many students commented on how they saw a greater involvement and participating of students with disabilities in the lesson compared to traditional teaching. However, when speculating about the reasons of why students with disabilities seem to be included, some students pointed out that “they [students with disabilities] had to be included” while others suggested that students with disabilities “would want to be included.” Jeremiah further said, “They [students with disabilities] would want to be included. I mean everyone wants to be included in flag football like we are doing now.” Students without disabilities saw students with disabilities being just like other students and that students with disabilities would want to participate in physical education lessons because “they want to play with other kids.” Yet, students without disabilities had a sense that students with disabilities had to be included in Sport Education because each member of the team had distinct roles and responsibilities.

Overall, there was a general consensus among students without disabilities that students with disabilities “should be included” in the Sport Education season. However, what is interesting to note is the choice of words when discussing peer participation. Most students referred to students with disabilities as “them” while referring to students without disabilities as “us.” For example, while suggesting that physical education in general should include students with disabilities, Nancy separated students with disabilities and students without disabilities into distinct groups saying, “I think THEY should be included with US” (emphasis added). At the end of the season, discussing how Sport Education provided students with disabilities ample opportunities to participate, another student wrote in his critical incident report, “It [Sport Education] gave THEM a chance to play just like US, the way WE play every day” (emphasis added). Such delineation of two groups, students with disabilities and students without disabilities, seemed fairly common for many students without disabilities.

**Perceptions of equality.** There was a strong commitment for many students without disabilities to voice their support for providing equality for all students. Commonly held beliefs of students without disabilities in the study suggested that “. . . all of us should be treated equally” and that “we are all human beings and we should all participate together.” However, these beliefs were sometimes confronted by others and it became “difficult sometimes” to defend them. Amy further elaborated on these difficulties stating, “Some people say, ‘they can’t be with us, because, they aren’t like us.’” However, there was an unwavering commitment by most students “to get along with people and have different people to hang around with,” including students with disabilities.

When describing experiences during Sport Education, students without disabilities suggested that in their view students with disabilities were able to participate “most of the time a

lot.” All students seemed to play an equal amount of time and were able to work well together toward a common goal. Jeremiah said, “We all play, whether you are blocking or going out for a pass or getting the ball handed off to you, we are all working together.” On the other hand, a few students commented in their interviews and critical incident reports that students with disabilities “could have participated more.” For example, during group-oriented tasks and tasks that required significant cognitive efforts (e.g., choosing team name, creating posters, and designing offensive or defensive plays), students with disabilities did not seem to contribute to group discussions. As a case in point, during the time when the team “Touchdown Penguins” was creating a poster, one of the students with disabilities was present but contributed little to the team project.

Wesley is in his group/team. He is not really talking. He is just sitting there not saying anything. Group is not excluding him, but not including him. No one is being mean. Most boys are talking and pointing at poster while designing it. Every now and then, Wesley laughs, but not much. (Field Notes, Lesson 3)

**Environment of assisting others.** Students without disabilities expressed a strong feeling of enjoyment in assisting their peers with statements like “I like to help” and “It was good to teach them.” All students seemed to have worked together in finding ways to help their classmates and helping others was something that frequently and naturally occurred during this physical education class. When assisting students with disabilities, some students had to rely on providing physical demonstrations in addition to verbal explanations. For example, Jason suggested that,

You kind of have to explain things more in depth to them cuz they . . . are not as fast like learning as some other kids are. You might just have to show them better. I might say to everybody ‘go over there, go over here’ but with [them] I might have to walk them over where they should go and walk out the route for them.

Helping their peers, students without disabilities felt like they were motivating their classmates to participate outside of physical education when they commented they thought that “teaching

them to play might make them want to play in a league or something.” In addition, assisting students with disabilities was considered important to improve their skills as well as self-esteem. It would enable students with disabilities to be more successful by “giving them lots of chances to make catches and touchdowns to make them feel good.”

**Accommodations and modifications.** Students without disabilities were able to assist their classmates by making accommodations to aid in their success. Examples of students making modifications included “having them stay close to me so that all I have to do is talk to him,” “explain things in different ways,” and providing demonstrations or alternative tasks. Students without disabilities had to modify their verbal communications to fully engage students with disabilities. The critical change in patterns of verbal communications was learning to provide short instructions. Jeffrey noted that using short cues, statements and “different words or phrases such as ‘run straight’ or ‘stay behind me’ when we gave instructions” provided clear communication and allowed for greater engagement from students without disabilities.

Leading by examples and providing demonstrations, students without disabilities helped students with disabilities gain a better understanding of what they were to do in each play. Below is a typical progression of a coach helping a student with disabilities learn a particular play.

The teachers told us to watch everyone and make sure they are doing things right and try to help when we can. Then we go through things and they see you doing things and then they try to do it too. My assistant coach will do examples because he has played football before and he will show the routes that they are supposed to run. (Cameron)

Some students with disabilities had difficulty understanding what the team was trying to accomplish and became disinterested. When this happened, coaches had to find a way to keep the practice or game going by providing an alternative task or switching players’ position.

Kevin is getting angry, keeps throwing his hands down on his thighs. Team is yelling for him to go to a spot during a play, he is getting confused and is not sure where to go in every play. The coach put him at center and he [Kevin] seems to like it more. He hikes

the ball and blocks, his teammates show him how to do each move. (Field notes, Lesson 9)

Susan doesn't want to play today and walked off the field. Her friend goes with her and gets a ball to throw back and forth on the sideline. Susan seems to enjoy this and is laughing. They eventually rejoin the game. (Field notes, Lesson 9)

**Greater understanding of students with disabilities.** The more times that students with disabilities are included in activities alongside of their peers, the more opportunities they have in understanding them. In the critical incident reports, there were many comments like “they [students with disabilities] show us how to deal with them [students with disabilities] in a positive way” and “it helped me understand special needs kids better.” Even though the activity sometimes seemed slower than usual, students without disabilities did not seem to mind. One student commented, “It doesn't take that long to show them [students with disabilities] really.” Assumptions that students with a disability cannot do as well as students without a disability were common; however, comments like “they understand more than you think they do” and “it was interesting to learn that they think a lot like us” showed that all students were learning more about each other through the Sport Education unit.

Most students seem to have positive attitudes toward their peers and felt like students with disabilities should be included in the general physical education class. However, sometimes the resulting outcome was perceived as distracting “because she [student with disability] didn't want to play half the time” or slowing the action as “they aren't as fast at learning, not as advanced.” Still, the students without disabilities displayed a sense of compassion toward their classmates with disabilities saying, “it made me feel bad because I knew I couldn't stand the way I would feel if I was him.”

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate students without disabilities' conceptions and experiences of participating alongside students with disabilities using the Sport Education curriculum model. Physical education teachers are charged with the task of providing physical education to all students regardless of ability or disability. Previous studies have determined that there is no difference in attitudes toward students with disabilities between children attending integrated or segregated schools (Slininger et al., 2000; Tripp et al., 1995). Similar to previous research (Hastie et al., 2011), the findings of this study provided further evidence that middle school students enjoyed their participation in Sport Education. The students particularly liked their roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for leadership.

The findings provided further evidence to previous studies (Fittipaldi-Wert et al., 2009; Foley et al., 2007) for the possibility of successful inclusion of students with disabilities in Sport Education. The results also confirmed Seidentop's assertion of Sport Education allowing student instruction, management, and ownership of learning (Seidentop et al., 2011). The findings extrapolated from the data support Allport's Contact Theory (1954) and are discussed within its major tenets. These findings include students' evidence of enjoyable participation in Sport Education and their experiences with students with disabilities that gave an indication of a sense of inclusion, perceptions of equality, a climate of assisting others, accommodations and modifications during the activity, and a greater understanding of students with disabilities.

The major tenet of Contact Theory is the presence of positive intergroup contact in which the following four conditions must be present: equal status within the situation, agreement between the groups, a common purpose among the group, and genuine agreement (Allport, 1954). The intergroup contact should contain "frequent, meaningful, and pleasant interactions"

(Lieberman et al., 2004, p. 38) between all parties. The structure of this season of Sport Education seemed to contribute to these conditions as students relied upon each team member during skill practice, game play, individual responsibilities, and team roles for the success of their season.

Equal status in Sport Education was achieved by students having different roles and responsibilities as well as working together to explore ways in which to contribute to the teams' success. In these equal-status situations, students learn to respect each other and benefit from what each brings to the situation (Sherrill, Heikinaro-Johansson, & Slininger, 1994). There was a strong sense of equality within this Sport Education season. The structure of Sport Education seemed to have contributed to students in this study working together for the common purpose, which could only be achieved with everyone's participation. In addition, a choice of content for this Sport Education season, namely flag football, enhanced the team-oriented nature of the season.

In this study, students without disabilities considered students with disabilities as being part of the class, part of the team, and perceived that they were fully included in the Sport Education season. This finding supports Schnorr's (1990) assertion that students with disabilities who were included in general physical education full-time were more likely to be considered a part of the class rather than a separate entity within the class. Equal status in this study did not mean equal participation of everyone in each task. The structure of Sport Education allowed for a number of tasks with varying levels of involvement. For students in this study, equal status meant everyone's participation to their ability level and level of understanding of the task.

The findings of the study demonstrated that there was a definitive recognition of separate groups: students with disabilities and students without disabilities. However, the *agreement*

among students without disabilities was for students with disabilities to be included in all parts of Sport Education season without any limitations. This agreement was validated by students without disabilities not only expressing their support for inclusion, but more importantly, seeking and providing accommodations and modifications to allow full participation by students with disabilities. This finding provided empirical evidence to Foley et al.'s (2007) recommendations for developing disability awareness using the Sport Education model.

There was an agreement among students without disabilities in this study that inclusion had a positive effect on all students and the activity. In fact, some students perceived greater participation by students with disabilities in the Sport Education season than that in the traditional teaching. This mutual, genuine agreement gave students the opportunity to learn about the behaviors fostered by the inclusion process, leading to a greater understanding of individuals with disabilities in the community and the home (Sherrill et al., 1994). In this Sport Education season, students created an environment of assisting others, be it students with or without disabilities. The by-product of intentional and purposeful interactions as well as the necessity of constantly working together and of helping others led students without disabilities to gain a greater understanding of students with disabilities. This finding highlighted the importance of the notion of creating specific and positive interaction experiences and situations in carefully structured environment which then could lead to positive attitudes toward inclusion (Tripp & Sherrill, 2004).

Such environment was fostered by the requirements of the Sport Education model for students to take on roles and work together to meet the common goal—strengthening the team to perform to the best of their ability (Siedentop et al., 2011). This *common purpose* for both groups was evident throughout the season. Students without disabilities included students with

disabilities in planning, practices, and plays on and off of the football field. They worked together to make sure that all individuals had the opportunity to perform their tasks and when a misunderstanding occurred, actions were taken to see the team through with their objectives.

In this study, the Sport Education season served as a vehicle for students to work together, teach and understand each other, and enjoy the festivities that came along with sports participation. This type of environment must be planned and structured so that students with and without disabilities have an opportunity to have a voice in the team's planning of and participation in the activity. Sport Education is typically longer than traditional units, allowing for an extended time for consistent contact among all participants (Siedentop et al., 2011). This longer period of purposeful contact allowed students to form meaningful relationships over prolonged periods of time, which fostered positive social interaction necessary for equal, agreeable, and genuine inclusion (Allport, 1954).

This study was not without its limitations: there were no students with physical disabilities in the class, only students with social/emotional or intellectual disabilities. The findings of this study, then, are only applicable to this Sport Education season and to the participants and students with social/emotional or intellectual disabilities and should not be generalized to other populations. However, the empirical evidence with this population is potent as the research indicates that students without disabilities prefer those with a physical disabilities over those with learning and social/emotional disabilities (Tripp et al., 1995). Furthermore, the findings of this study outline perspectives of students without disabilities on the inclusion of students with disabilities in the Sport Education season and provide empirical support of one successful case of inclusion.

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APPENDIX A  
IRB APPROVAL FORM

Office for Research  
Institutional Review Board for the  
Protection of Human Subjects

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA**  
RESEARCH

April 18, 2012

Allison Jackson  
Department of Kinesiology  
College of Education  
The University of Alabama

Re: IRB # 12-OR-136 "Inclusion of Students with Disabilities During a Season of Sport Education"

Dear Ms. Jackson:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

*(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.*

Your application will expire on April 17, 2013. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of the IRB Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved informed consent form to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



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APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**SUBJECT CONSENT FORM FOR  
PARTICIPATION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA**

**“STUDENTS WITHOUT DISABILITIES’ CONCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF  
INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN A SEASON OF SPORT  
EDUCATION”**

Study Title: “Including Students with Disabilities into a Season of Sport Education”

Investigator’s Name: Allison Jackson, doctoral student.

You are being asked to give permission for your child to take part in a research study.

This study is called “Including Students with Disabilities into a Season of Sport Education.” The study is being done by a doctoral student, Allison Jackson, and her faculty advisors, Dr. Oleg Sinelnikov and Dr. Matthew Curtner-Smith, from The University of Alabama, Department of Kinesiology.

What is the purpose of this study--what are you trying to learn?

I hope to learn how physical education teachers and students with and without disabilities perceive using the Sport Education curriculum model as a means of including students with disabilities in their physical education class.

Why is this study important--what good will the results do?

The study will provide data for teachers on using the Sport Education curriculum model when including students with disabilities in their general physical education class. It should indicate what types of knowledge are important, what issues are considered significant, what decisions teachers make as they teach, what background knowledge impacts their ability to teach this curriculum, and what barriers and enablers exist over the course of teaching this curriculum. This understanding will hopefully help create a more positive atmosphere for physical education.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?

Students have been asked to participate in order to give voice to the literature directly from the students themselves.

How many other people will be in this study?

There will be three physical education teachers in this study as well as any student, with or without disabilities, enrolled in the physical education class.

What will I be asked to do in this study?

As part of the study, you will be asked to give your perceptions of participating in physical education with students with disabilities during a season of Sport Education. I would like to observe and videotape 20 lessons and perform 2 interviews, one individual and one with your classmates who are also participating in the study. The interviews will last approximately 30 minutes and will be audio recorded. I would like your permission to use all of these data in the study described above.

How much time will I spend being in the study?

This study will require approximately 1 hour total outside of your classroom time with the remaining time being during your physical education class.

Will being in this study cost us anything?

The only cost to you is the time spent during the study.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Can the investigator take me out of this study?

The investigator may take you out of the study if she feels that the study is upsetting you or if something happens that means you no longer meet the study requirements.

What are the benefits to science or society?

This study will provide data to other teachers wishing to use the Sport Education curriculum model as a means of including students with disabilities in physical education. I am hoping to provide valuable information that will help create a more positive atmosphere for physical education teachers and their students.

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?

The nature of the data collection ensures that there is no physical or psychological risk of any kind to you.

How will my privacy be protected?

Only the researcher will know the identity of the participants and all data will be kept in a secure place for a maximum of 3 years at which time it will be destroyed.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

The audio recording of the interviews will be erased immediately after transcription. During that time, the recording will be stored in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's office. The data will be retained by the principal investigator for a period of 3 years. It will be kept locked in the principal investigator's office during that time. After 3 years, all data will be destroyed. The information provided by you will be confidential. In the event that the information collected is published in a professional journal, your confidentiality will be protected by referring to you only by pseudonym (fake name). On completion of the study the results will be made available and explained to you if you so desire.

Do I have to participate in this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time.

What if we have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints?

If you have any questions about this research contact: Allison Jackson at (205) 527-1074 or [ajackson4@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:ajackson4@crimson.ua.edu), Oleg Sinelnikov at (205)348-8363 or [osinelnikov@bamaed.ua.edu](mailto:osinelnikov@bamaed.ua.edu), or Matt Curtner-Smith at (205) 348-9209 or [msmith@bamaed.ua.edu](mailto:msmith@bamaed.ua.edu). Finally, if you have any

questions about research participants' rights then you may contact Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer at the University of Alabama, at (205)348-5152.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at [http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO\\_Welcome.html](http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html) or email the Research Compliance office at [participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu](mailto:participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu).

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

I am asking for the signature of both parents. If, however, one parent is not reasonably available or one parent is not capable of providing permission, one parent signature is appropriate.

AUTHORIZATION: I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions. I agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for the interviews to be audio recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission for the interviews to be audio recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to know the results of the study and this is how you can contact me

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want to know the results of the study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for the lessons to be videotaped.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission for the lessons to be videotaped.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
STUDENT ASSENT

**STUDENT ASSENT**

**“STUDENTS WITHOUT DISABILITIES’ CONCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN A SEASON OF SPORT EDUCATION”**

Dear Student,

I am a graduate student at The University of Alabama. I am going to be visiting your physical education class very soon. I would like to videotape your class while you participate in flag football. I will be sitting on top of the bleachers or on the sidelines and will not be in the way of the class at all. I will only videotape the entire class; I will not single out any one student.

I would also like to interview several students within the class about including students with disabilities into the physical education class. I would like to talk with you individually before the season begins and then again with a group when it is over.

Please let me know if you will agree to participate in my study by checking the correct statement and signing below. We will use fictitious names, which you will choose, and no one except me will watch the videos.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for the interviews to be audio recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission for the interviews to be audio recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for the lessons to be videotaped.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission for the lessons to be videotaped.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D

PARENTAL PERMISSION FOR OBSERVATION AND VIDEOTAPE

**PARENTAL PERMISSION FOR OBSERVATION AND VIDEOTAPE**

**“STUDENTS WITHOUT DISABILITIES’ CONCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN A SEASON OF SPORT EDUCATION”**

Dear Parent,

My name is Allison Jackson and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Kinesiology at The University of Alabama. I am conducting a study to explore perceptions of using the Sport Education curriculum model to include students with disabilities in the general physical education classes. Three of the teachers at your child’s school have been invited to participate in my study. I will come to the school and conduct passive observation in these teachers’ physical education classes for the duration a 20 lesson season. I would like your permission for it as well. The passive observation will only involve me sitting on the side of the gym and handwriting notes on my notebook. My visits will be on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. I will not interrupt the class at all.

In addition, I would like to videotape all lessons from an obscure location in the gym. There will be no compensation for any children or teachers in the video. There will be no penalties for children who do not wish to take part in the video. The physical education teacher will instruct the children whose parents do not want them to be in the video to do other physical activities on the other side of the gym.

I am asking for the signature of both parents. If, however, one parent is not reasonably available or one parent is not capable of providing permission, one signature is appropriate. Please sign below if you will allow your child to participate in the activities in which the video will be made. This video will be viewed only by the investigators of the study and will be destroyed when the study is complete.

Best Regards,

Allison Jackson  
Department of Kinesiology  
The University of Alabama  
Cell phone: (205) 527-1074  
Email: [ajackson4@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:ajackson4@crimson.ua.edu)

Yes, you may include my child in the videotaped activity  
 No, please do not include my child in the videotaped activity  
Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Child’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E  
FORMAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## FORMAL INTERVIEW FOR STUDENTS WITHOUT DISABILITIES

### “STUDENTS WITHOUT DISABILITIES’ CONCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN A SEASON OF SPORT EDUCATION”

#### **Background information (multiple prompts allowed)\***

How old are you?

How long have you attended this school?

Have you been in physical education class with students with disabilities before?

Are there students with disabilities in your physical education class this year?

Do you all participate together or have separate activities?

#### **Past experience in physical education**

Tell me what physical education has been like for you.

Do you like to participate in physical activity?

Do you like for students with disabilities to participate in the same activities along with you?

When they participate, do you feel that they are included in the activity?

Are they included because they have to or because they want play with other children?

When they are in the activity, how much do they get to participate?

Do you pass them the ball?

Do you find that they end up doing other things instead of participating?

#### **Sport Education**

Do you know what sport education is?

What kind of responsibilities have you had on the team?

Has a student with disabilities held a job that you would like to do?

What is your favourite job?

Have you been the coach?

Do other kids pay attention to you and do as you ask them to?

Does everyone follow the instructions of the coach?

Do the teachers give everyone a chance to do all of the jobs?

Does everyone get to play an equal amount of time?

#### **Inclusion**

Do you believe that students with disabilities slow the class down or help the class learn more?

Does it help when the student with disabilities has someone helping them or a different piece of

equipment to help them?

Do you think that students with disabilities should have their own physical education class separate from other students?

Would it bother you if students with disabilities had different equipment like a lower goal or lower net?

Would you be willing to be a peer tutor for a student with disabilities?

Would you be a partner to a student with disabilities?

APPENDIX F  
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

**FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW  
STUDENTS WITHOUT DISABILITIES**

**“STUDENTS WITHOUT DISABILITIES’ CONCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF  
INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN A SEASON OF SPORT  
EDUCATION”**

The purpose of this interview is to *explore students’ perceptions of inclusion in physical education during a season of Sport Education*. The second interview is based upon your reflections about the SE season in which you have just participated. There are no right or wrong answers; be frank in your responses.

*Students without disabilities (multiple prompts allowed)*

How did the flag football season go?

What roles did you take throughout the season?

Did you include your teammates with disabilities in the activity?

Did they participate as much as you would like for them to?

When was there a time when you noticed that they were not included?

Were they always active in the practices and games?

What did you do when they would not participate?

What could the teachers do to help include them in the activities?

Other

Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about regarding your participating in physical education?

## CHAPTER II

### THE VOICES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN A SEASON OF SPORT EDUCATION

#### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to highlight the voices of students with disabilities regarding their perceptions and experiences of participation in a season of Sport Education. The participants in this study were four seventh graders (two boys and two girls) from an intact middle school physical education class in the southeast. Data collection took place over a 7-week period during the entire season in which the students participated in flag football. The researcher was present 3 days a week for the entire season and used the following data collection methods: formal interviews with each student, informal discussions, and non-participant observations with field notes. In addition, all lessons were videotaped to substantiate the researcher's field notes. Results showed that students with disabilities felt like they were a part of the physical education class. The findings were such that students with disabilities felt they were socially accepted, participated in a student-centered learning environment, had assistance in learning, and experienced teamwork and learned about having roles on their team. Sport Education permitted students with disabilities to take ownership in their learning alongside their peers by working in small groups, get to know other students on a more personal level, and participate in physical education in a more meaningful way.

*Keywords:* Inclusion, students with disabilities, physical education

## **The Voices of Students With Disabilities and Their Participation in a Season of Sport Education**

There is emerging evidence in contemporary education literature of the value of listening to student voices (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004) and consequently of researchers' increasing attempts to include student voices when investigating issues that are pertinent to students' lives and experiences (Byrnes & Rickerts, 2011; Cefai & Cooper, 2010). These developments in educational settings stem from a global movement on child advocacy providing children with legal rights to express their views (Hagglund & Thelander, 2011) and teachers observing benefits from consulting children and young people (Robinson & Taylor, 2007).

When theorizing complexities of examining the conception of student voice and its practical implication, Robinson and Taylor (2007) outlined its four core values. These include a conception of communication as dialogue, the requirement for participation and democratic inclusivity, the recognition that power relations are unequal and problematic, and the possibility for change and transformation. Moreover, they argued that "a greater understanding of the core values and their embedding in practice has the potential to enable improvements in schools in relation to some key issues of social justice" (p. 8).

### **Research on Students with Disabilities' Voice in Physical Education**

To date, there has been relatively little research on student voice in education (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Curtin & Clarke, 2005), and specifically on student voice in physical education (Couturier, Chepko, & Coughlin, 2005). In addition, there is a lack of studies that allow students with disabilities to voice their experiences in physical education (Blinde & McCallister, 1998; Fitzgerald, Jobling, & Kirk, 2003). There is a debate among scholars on defining what student voice is, and the argument is made for researchers to proceed cautiously and not to conceptualize student voice as a "monolingual assumption" but rather take into account many ways in which

students express their views and feelings (Robinson & Taylor, 2007, p. 6). Whether in the general education classroom or the physical education classroom, students with disabilities of all types express similar feelings about being included with students without disabilities. They generally feel unconnected with teachers, experience unfairness and injustice from both teachers and peers, struggle with having their voice heard, are bored from the disconnect during learning experiences, and feel excluded all too often because teachers and students fail to meet their needs (Cefai & Cooper, 2010).

Coates and Vickerman (2008) suggested that most of the studies to date have similar findings relative to students with disabilities' perspectives regarding their experiences of participation in physical education. The recurring themes from the studies included in their review showed that while students with disabilities gained social and emotional enjoyment as well as physical benefits during physical education, participation was restricted by students' behaviors such as staring and curiosity which led to negative self-image. Students with disabilities also expressed that the physical education teacher excluded them from activities because of their disabilities and modification of the activities did not occur on a regular basis (Blinde & McCallister, 1998). This is most likely due in part to the lack of professional training that most physical education teachers have when including students with disabilities into the general physical education curriculum (DePauw & Karp, 1994).

Students with disabilities experience "good days" when they feel a sense of belonging with their peers and "bad days" when their competence is questioned or they are given little opportunity to participate (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000, p. 151). Spencer-Cavaliere and Watkinson (2010) described inclusion as a subjective experience depicting personal perception of an experience through thoughts and feelings of being included. Students reported that gaining

entry into play, feeling like a legitimate participant, and having friends are key findings of their study. Students with disabilities want to be involved in physical activity but they also want to feel like they belong with other students who are participating (Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010). Unfortunately however, that is not always the case as Place and Hodge (2001) found that students with disabilities spent only 2% of their time in social talk with students without disabilities and less than 1% of the time was spent in praise and feedback by students without disabilities. One of the explanations offered was that the students with disabilities were grouped together and kept apart from the rest of the class. When planning and structuring the physical education lesson, teachers must take into account all students and their ability to participate in the activity (Place & Hodge, 2001).

Physical education brings disability to its full awareness more so than the general education classroom, due to the fact that in the classroom students sit at desks or tables and to some extent hide behind its structures. Students with physical disabilities, for example those using a wheelchair, are constantly reminded that they are different, which may be a leading cause of self-consciousness and contradictory feelings about physical education (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000). Sometimes students with physical disabilities feel they do not fit in because they appear to be incapable of performing as well as able-bodied children (Blinde & McCallister, 1998). The traditional physical education environment may not be much better for students with intellectual or social/emotional disabilities as they find unstructured interactions with others difficult (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000).

Often, students with disabilities feel “sad” or “mad” when they are left out of activities and they just want to “get out there and play just like the other ones” (Blinde & McCallister, 1998, p. 67; Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010). When

traditional, teacher-centered curriculums are utilized, students with disabilities find themselves lost in the background and become disengaged which could lead to doubting their own abilities (Cefai & Cooper, 2010).

### **A Case for Sport Education for Students with Disabilities**

One pedagogical model that promotes participation of all students at all times is Sport Education (Siedentop, 1998). Its core structures provide an integrated support system for a high degree of inclusion of all students and is also believed to be useful for including students with disabilities in general physical education (Siedentop, Hastie, & van der Mars, 2011). Sport Education allows teachers to provide authentic sport experiences to students (Siedentop, 1998). As such, experts in the field consider that Sport Education could be an avenue to increase opportunities for students with disabilities (Block, 2007; Pressé, Block, Horton, & Harvey, 2011; Siedentop et al., 2011; Tindall & Foley, 2011).

The main goal of Sport Education is to develop students into becoming competent, literate, and enthusiastic sportspeople (Siedentop et al., 2011). The Sport Education is founded on six distinct characteristics of sports. Similar to a traditional sport, seasons guide the curriculum and require students to be affiliated with a team whereby they choose a team name, color, mascot, cheers, and team-designed jersey. Each team participates in formal competition beginning and ending with a tournament with skill practice and league play in between. The students take on the roles of coach, referee/umpire, statistician, conditioning coach, as well as perform recordkeeping responsibilities each class period. To end the season, there is a culminating event to showcase skills and tactics that were learned and to provide the students an opportunity for a championship game. Last, the end of the season is celebrated with festivities that allow individual and team achievements to be noticed and rewarded.

Sport Education is positioned as a student-led curriculum model which fits well with the peer-tutor literature (Klavina, 2008) as students provide much of the instruction to each other, not just to students with disabilities. Throughout the school year, students may choose to rotate the roles so they are able to understand and appreciate the responsibility of each role (Pressé et al., 2011). Modifications to the game can be made to rules, equipment, size of the court/field, or other avenues for creating a diverse learning environment which works for the good of all students. In Sport Education, students with disabilities are no longer only the scorekeeper or line judge. By using peer-assisted tutoring, as in Sport Education, students with disabilities tend to receive more frequent instructions and activity engagement time is higher than in the traditional teacher-directed setting (Klavina, 2008).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Research on the voices of students with disabilities regarding inclusion has received little recognition (Blinde & McCallister, 1998; Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler, Fliess, Chacham, & Auweele, 2002; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010). Much of the research on inclusion relates to either the teachers' perspective (Block, 2007; Lienert, Sherrill, & Myers, 2001; Martin & Kudlacek, 2010; Obrusnikova & Dillon, 2011; Samalot-Rivera & Porretta, 2009) or to the physical education setting itself (Columna, Davis, Lieberman & Lytle, 2010; Davis, Hodson, Zhang, Boswell, & Decker, 2010; DePauw & Doll-Tepper, 2000; Goodwin, 2001; Rouse, 2009). The purpose of this study was to highlight the voices of students with disabilities regarding their perceptions and experiences of participation in a season of Sport Education.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study used Contact Theory (CT) as the basis for its theoretical framework (Allport, 1954). CT proposes that prejudice and discrimination of a minority group will be reduced when

four distinct conditions are met: (a) all individuals involved must share equal status, (b) the community as a whole must agree to the equality, (c) individuals must agree in the common purpose, and (d) the agreement must be genuine (Allport, 1954). Allport (1954) also posited that individuals that differ from the majority of people in a place will experience discrimination of some kind until all parties are familiar with each other. When casual contact is made between two individuals, the ideas and understandings they hold for each other are confirmed because of the perceptions they retain and any change in behavior or perception must come from meeting all of the conditions stated above. Fishbein (1996), while conducting cooperative interaction studies, found that students with and without disabilities cannot share equal status because students without disabilities felt they helped students with disabilities but did not feel that the same was true reciprocally. However, the more cooperative interaction individuals have with each other, the more potential exists for a positive relationship to transpire.

Citing initial evidence as well as providing more recent evidence, Pettigrew (1998) confirmed that CT pertains to present day situations as strongly as when Allport first began discussing it. Intergroup friendship evokes all four of Allport's mediating processes mentioned above pointing out that individual differences as well as society shape the individual's experiences. Slininger, Sherrill, and Jankowski (2000) found that the longer students worked cooperatively, the more intentional their contact with each other became. For example, students began calling each other by name and described each other in a positive light.

In physical education, the issue of equality among students is a complex phenomenon since students with disabilities sometimes require assistance from students or teachers so that progress in learning can occur. Sherrill (2004) believed that contact does not promote positive attitudes unless it is planned and structured. The favorable notion of planned and structured

interactions was supported by a number of studies in which peers were trained to assist students with disabilities (Houston-Wilson, Dunn, van der Mars, & McCubbin, 1997; Klavina & Block, 2008; Lieberman, Dunn, van der Mars, & McCubbin, 2000). On the other hand, “social acceptance implies that contact is voluntary, spontaneous, of equal status, and generalized” (Sherrill, 2004, p. 253). Therefore, implicit and explicit consideration of these complex notions within CT seems to be a viable theoretical framework for this study.

## **Methods**

### **Setting and Participants**

The participants in this study were four seventh graders (two boys and two girls) from an intact physical education class in a middle school located in a small town in the southeastern region of the United States. The school enrolls approximately 800 students of which 15% receive reduced or free school meals and approximately 85% has English as their first language. Three of the four students had attended the school for 2 years while the fourth began attending at the start of the present school year. All of the students were included in a majority of general education classes and received special education services for a majority of their school experience. The appropriate approval of the author’s Institutional Review Board (see Appendix G) of this study was secured prior to its commencement as well as permission from the school and county administration. All students involved in the study provided assent to participate with their parents/legal guardians providing informed consent (see Appendices H-J). Since every child is unique in their abilities, the individual description of the participants follows.

Kevin, a 13-year-old African American male, has autism spectrum disorder (ASD). He is verbal and communicates easily with his peers; however, he does receive speech therapy. He is well-liked by students and teachers alike as many spoke of him as “no different from any other

student in the class.” He is considered to be a high-skilled student with disabilities by his physical education teachers and is taller and heavier than most of the students in the class. His skills and size typically benefit him in the context of physical education classes and he subsequently enjoys participating in physical education.

Susan is a 13-year-old, Caucasian female who has ASD. She was new to the school at the beginning of the school year so she was just beginning to settle into her routine at the onset of the study. Cognitively, she is high-functioning; however, her physical skills are lower than those of her peers. Socially, she is accepted by most of the students in the class; however, she does not like to be around too many students at one time. There are a few female students that Susan prefers to be around, so they typically choose to be in the same group as her, making her feel more comfortable. One female in particular, Jessica, has made it her goal to be friends with Susan and tries to be always paired with her.

James is a 13-year-old boy who identifies himself as Hispanic. He has been diagnosed with specific learning disabilities (SLDs). James is well-liked by other students but tends to keep to himself rather than being involved with a group of other students. Physically, James is developmentally delayed but participates in most activities; however, he has difficulty coordinating multiple skills necessary in many sports.

Maria is a 12-year-old Hispanic female who has SLDs. Her primary language is Spanish, which she speaks better than English. Socially, she is very shy and usually finds it difficult to make friends. Maria is considered by physical educators to be a lower skilled student than most of the girls in the class. She attempts to participate in physical education classes when she must, but usually tries to avoid participation.

To contextualize participants' abilities, we provide brief descriptions of ASDs and SLDs and note that both categories are broadly defined. Most common ASDs include autistic disorder, Asperger syndrome, Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder--Not Otherwise Specified (Heward, 2009). ASDs are related by behavioral characteristics including difficulty and deficits in verbal and nonverbal communications and social interactions (IDEIA, 1997).

Specifically, individuals with ASDs find difficulty in relating to others as well as prefer being alone rather than in the midst of a crowd (Heward, 2009). There is also a desire for repetitive and restrictive stereotypic behaviors (APA, 2000) and individuals with ASDs typically thrive on routine (Heward, 2009). SLD is a

disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculation. (Heward, 2009, p. 173)

Approximately 75% of children that are diagnosed with SLD show signs of social meagerness (Kavale & Forness, 1996).

### **The Sport Education Season**

The students participated in a 20-lesson season of flag football designed and taught according to the principals of Sport Education (Siedentop et al., 2011). Each lesson was approximately 50 minutes long. During the season, all students remained on the same team and participated in skill practice interspersed with non-consequence games. A festive culminating event concluded the season. In addition, all students took part in selecting individuals from their teams to fulfill specific roles. The fidelity of the Sport Education season was assessed by examining planned and actual specific teacher pedagogical behaviors using the Sport Education Benchmark Instrument (Sinelnikov, 2009) (see Table 3).

Table 3.

*Demonstration of Sport Education Pedagogical Behaviors*

	<b>Benchmark Element</b>	<b>Planned</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Teacher plans unit around the principle of a <b>season</b>	Management/Organizational phase	√	√
	Team Selection Phase	√	√
	Pre-season scrimmage phase	√	√
	Regular season phase	√	√
	End of season event	√	√
	Students involved in the process of team selection	√	√
Teacher promotes the <b>affiliation</b> concept	Persisting teams for duration of unit	√	√
	Teams are easily identifiable	√	√
	Incorporates student duty roles within lessons	√	√
Teacher promotes students taking <b>responsibility</b>	Establishes contract and/or accountability for student performance in roles	X	X
	Teacher holds student accountable	√	√
	Teacher provides training for referees	X	X
	Teacher utilizes tasks to train students on effective verbal communication and feedback	√	√
	Teacher provides task sheets for coaches/captains	√	√
	Teacher adopts a facilitator approach during interactions with student groups	√	√
	Teacher encourages students to resolve conflict within groups	√	√
	A formal schedule of competition is established	√	√
Teacher uses <b>formal competition</b> within unit plan	Fair play and sportsman awards utilized	√	√
	Incorporates peer assessment as part of record keeping process	√	√
	Regular postings of team performance	√	√
	Culminating event is festive in nature	√	√
Teacher uses <b>culminating event</b>	Teacher emphasizes the celebration of fair play	√	√
Teacher uses <b>festivity</b> within unit	Teacher emphasizes the celebration of fair play	√	√

A qualitative analysis of relevant documents such as lesson plans, season plans, and team playbooks was also used (Metzler, 2005). The fidelity of Sport Education was deemed to be in line with Seidentop et al.'s (2011) recommendations for a typical season.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection took place over a 7-week period encompassing the entire season during which the students participated in flag football. The researcher was present 3 days a week for the entire season and used the following data collection methods: formal interviews with each student, informal discussions, and non-participant observations with field notes. In addition, all lessons were videotaped to substantiate the researcher's field notes.

An interview was the primary method used to gain the meaning of the experiences of the participants in their own words (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), while informal discussions throughout the study gave further insight into events that occurred during the season. Each participant was interviewed twice, once in the beginning and once at the end of the season. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. The interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix K) and took place in a quiet place located in the gym during the general physical education class time, usually on a day with inclement weather so as to not remove the student from participation. A semi-structured interview allowed for flexibility of questioning in order to gain more insight into the perceptions of the students (Patton, 2002).

Numerous informal interviews occurred immediately before and after lessons throughout the study and provided further insight into what was said in the interviews and events that took place or were about to take place during the lesson or the season. All interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and transcribed verbatim after each interview.

Each lesson, the researcher assumed an inconspicuous position in the gym and took copious field notes focusing on students' participation, interaction, and skill work. In addition, the lessons were videotaped to document the student-to-student interaction as well as student-to-teacher interaction that might have been otherwise missed. Videotaping provided visual documentation of situations such as social conflict as well as non-verbal behavior like facial expressions and gestures (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The researcher assumed an inconspicuous position in the facility in order to observe and videotape the activity.

### **Data Analysis**

Collected data were reviewed and analyzed using analytic induction and constant comparison processes (Creswell, 2007). Themes were extracted from the data so as to find descriptions and explanations of student participation in the lessons. All the data relevant to each category were identified and examined using constant comparison. In this process, each item was compared with other data collected in order to establish analytical categories. Trustworthiness of the information came from recurring information and was triangulated between all different data sources from the methods and any information that showed discrepancy was not used (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

### **Results**

By hearing what the students had to say and observing their participation during the season, the following themes were identified: (a) social acceptance, (b) student-centered learning environment, (c) assistance in learning, and (d) perceived responsibilities and participation. To further contextualize student with disabilities' involvement in a season, Table 4 provides description of their participation in team and game roles.

Table 4.

*Participation in Team and Game Roles*

Name	Team Role	Responsibility	Game Role
Kevin	Equipment Manager	Meet with coach at the beginning of class	Lineman
		Decide with coach what equipment was necessary for that day Retrieve equipment from storage Lay out equipment on the field Return equipment at class conclusion	Learn plays Identify which player to block according to the play Block opposing player
Maria	Equipment Manager	Meet with coach at the beginning of class	Snapper
		Decide with coach what equipment was necessary for that day Retrieve equipment from storage Lay out equipment on the field Return equipment at class conclusion	Learn plays and cadence Snap ball to QB Identify which player to block according to the play Block opposing player
James	Equipment Manager	Meet with coach at the beginning of class	Receiver/Runner
		Decide with coach what equipment was necessary for that day Retrieve equipment from storage Lay out equipment on the field Return equipment at class conclusion	Learn plays and routes Run correct routes at snap Run the ball & avoid tackles Catch passes
Susan	Co-warm up leader	Meet with coach	Lineman
		Work with co-leader to create a warm up routine Learn the warm up routine Co-lead the team in team warm up	Learn plays Identify which player to block according to the play Block opposing player
			Receiver/Runner
			Learn plays and routes Run correct routes at snap Run the ball & avoid tackles Catch passes

**Social Acceptance**

The students with disabilities in this study reported being accepted in their respective groups and that it was easier for them to make friends. The teams in this Sport Education season

were selected by teachers and students with disabilities were purposefully grouped to encourage participation and eliminate potential conflicts.

Teachers announced teams today. There are 7-8 players on each team. Each student with a disability ends up to be on a different team. Susan is on the same team as Jessica, her peer helper. Jessica is taking Susan with her to the team meeting.

Kevin is on a different team, his team is excited that he is with them. The members of the team are giving him high fives. Other students seem to be staying very (Field Notes, Day 1)

One of the participants, Susan, was immediately accepted as part of the team because of her relationship with Jessica who was a student without disabilities. Jessica seemed to be a leader among her peers and her status helped Susan interact with other students. Susan also seemed to participate with her team more when Jessica was around.

Jessica is not here and Susan is not happy. Her team is trying to get her to come sit with them but she keeps telling them to “leave me alone.” The team finally lets Susan sit away from them. Jessica came in about 15 minutes late and sat with the team as they were making poster, Susan is sitting with them now and happy that Jessica is there. (Field Notes, Day 2)

One of the identifiers of being socially accepted was the desire of others on the team to see students with disabilities succeed. As a case in point, the members of Kevin’s team worked together with the opposing team on a number of occasions to allow him to score a touchdown.

Kevin is trying but is getting frustrated a little because he isn’t doing right. The coach just passed him the ball; Kevin was close to him. He just scored, it seems like both teams let him score. Kevin is happy now and jumping around. (Field Notes/Video, Day 8)

Yet another identifier of being socially accepted was the opportunity for students with disabilities to have a specific connection with their teammates. For example, Maria and James, who were each equipment managers for their teams, had to interact each day to find out what equipment was needed. They would then retrieve footballs, round markers, and other equipment and return it to storage at the end of class. This sense of responsibility made both feel they were

an integral part of the team. Maria felt a heightened sense of responsibility saying, “If I don’t get the right stuff, the team can’t practice right, then we might lose our next game.”

This specific connection seemed to be reciprocal. One day James was absent and another teammate had to retrieve the equipment. When James returned the following day, the coach told him “Dude, I’m glad you’re back. We’ll have the right stuff today.” On the other hand, there were examples of James not being able to fully participate on the field due to his lack of comprehension of what he was expected to do or physical abilities necessary to accomplish the task. This seemed to decrease the degree of social acceptance from his teammates.

James is on the sideline, lost in what is going on. Teammates have to constantly prompt him each time to come onto the field. He doesn’t get a chance to run the ball much because he doesn’t seem to know what to do. They tell him what to do and try, but he drops the ball when it’s given to him. The next time, they run the play with another student. (Field Notes/Video, Day 11)

Students with disabilities expressed enjoyment in making friends during this Sport Education season because “there are a lot of people . . . and all your other classes you really don’t get to meet them” (Maria). Susan also mentioned that she had made friends in physical education and one in particular that she trusted. She said, “I have a lot of friends here in PE and Jessica is my friend.” In this season of Sport Education, the teams were small in size and it seemed easier for students with disabilities to get to know fewer students at a time. Susan suggested, “In physical education, there are a lot of people. Sometimes you get left out. I meet more other kids when we play this way.” James was also able to verbalize this sentiment, “At first you might not know everyone on your team but then it’s like you’ve known them for a long time. They’re your friends and you work together as a team putting effort into what you do.”

**Student-centered environment.** In this season of Sport Education, students with disabilities participated in some decision-making processes where their team was concerned.

However, the level of contribution among students with disabilities varied. For example, during the skill practice phase of Sport Education, when teams were creating their team names and posters, some students with disabilities did not verbally communicate or contribute to the discussions.

Wesley is in his group, not really talking. Sitting there not saying anything. The group is not excluding him, just not including him. No one being mean. Most boys talking and pointing at poster while designing. Every now and then Wesley laughs, but not much. (Field Notes/Video, Day 2)

Others seemed to provide more of a contribution to team tasks.

Maria is sitting with her group but doesn't seem to be saying much. Her team is creating a poster with team name and mascot. She is somewhat involved. Sitting almost outside of group. But talks to girl next to her. (Field Notes/Video, Day 2)

As the season progressed, students were given more responsibilities regarding daily management, structure, and instruction of their team. For example, each team was tasked with designing offensive plays and identifying routes for each player. These types of cooperative and small group tasks seemed to appeal to most students with disabilities. As a case in point, for Kevin, "making our own plays" was the favorite part of the Sport Education season.

The critical element for students with disabilities seemed to be the shared involvement in contributing to a common goal and the ability to voice their opinions with others. As Maria suggested, "I am not the coach but sometimes I have a good idea. It might help us make a score, so I just say it and sometimes they listen and sometimes they don't, but it's still fun."

During this Sport Education season, various members of each team were responsible for providing instructions to teammates at different times. For example, coaches were responsible for "teaching positions" and "practicing with the team" while warm up leaders "warmed up the team for practices and games." These types of peer-led instructions were seen by students with

disabilities as beneficial and “helping each other learn more” was voiced as their favorite part of Sport Education.

In addition to non-playing roles, students with disabilities in this season also had playing responsibilities which they seemed to take seriously. Some students with disabilities in this study seemed to relate their responsibility and its contribution to the team’s goal. For instances, when describing his playing role and what he did during games, Kevin said,

Physical education is awesome, I am the snapper. I have to get the ball to the quarterback so that we can score. It’s a real important job to have because we can’t score if I don’t snap the ball the right way. (Informal Interview)

On the other hand, while Susan participated in practices and games, she had difficulty describing her involvement on the team.

Susan is playing today. Her team ran a play for her, they threw her the ball. She caught it and ran into the end zone, scored a touchdown. Both teams jumped around her yelling that she scored but she didn’t get as excited as everyone else. (Field Notes/Video, Day 9)

When informally asked later about her touchdown, she was unable to describe what she did that made everyone else excited.

### **Assistance in Learning**

The assistance in learning theme in this study manifested in three distinct approaches. First, in this Sport Education season, having roles such as coaches, captains, and warm-up leaders on each team allowed multiple opportunities for peer instruction and feedback within the activity. Subsequently, students with disabilities commented on their peers helping them learn by providing direct instructions such as “he told me to go straight” and “keep the football in my hand.” Additionally, some students with disabilities recognized the importance of physical demonstrations by commenting, “I know what he meant when he showed me what to do.” The

requirement for all players to participate encouraged such assistance in learning and allowed for the social interaction between students that might not have otherwise occurred.

Second, there were instances when students with disabilities did not participate in the activity and their teammates were unable to involve them. The students without disabilities became disinterested in assisting when they could not elicit a response from the students with disabilities. In these situations, a teacher intervention became necessary.

James is not participating; the coach attempts to get him back on task but the teacher has to step in and get him back with his team. The QB tells him what he should do and teammates point to where he is supposed to go. Instead of running his route, he just walks through it and gives the ball back to the QB. (Field notes/Video, Day 9)

Finally, in other cases, students without disabilities took it upon themselves to work one on one with a student with disabilities. A good example of this was Susan who did not always want to participate in the class. Jessica often helped encourage and lead Susan through activities. Susan commented that her friend, Jessica, played with her when “others don’t want to do what I want to do.” Susan became frustrated with the activity so Jessica took her aside and engaged her in another task until she was ready to return to the play.

Susan is not having a very good day and doesn’t want to participate so Jessica brought Susan to the sideline and is throwing the ball with her. Susan is not wanting to cooperate but Jessica just keeps throwing her the ball. As they go on, Susan is beginning to laugh a little. She likes it when Jessica drops the ball, she laughs. Now Susan is laughing when she drops the ball herself. Jessica asks her if she ready to go back to play, Susan says okay. They are on the field now and Susan is participating some. (Field Note/Video, Day 12)

### **Perceived Responsibilities and Participation**

Students with disabilities responded well to having player responsibilities and responsibilities within the team. In terms of player responsibilities, each member of the team was assigned a specific role. Students with disabilities were able to understand and verbalize their responsibilities under different scenarios. For example, Kevin, when speaking of his role when

on defense, commented, “My coach told me to go grab the flag of the person with the ball.” By receiving direct instructions from his coach, Kevin knew what his task was during the play.

Additionally, other teammates would often reiterate the specific instructions for each play. For example, when blocking on offense, James said that his teammates would frequently tell him to “stand here and don’t let anyone get past you.” He then spoke with determination for the importance of his role: “We are all responsible to help our team win.”

Importantly, students with disabilities perceived that having a small number of students on each team allowed them more opportunities to participate in game play during Sport Education season. When speaking about his participation during regular physical education James said,

I don’t always get to play when we play the other way (i.e., traditional physical education). The kids that are better than me play the most and I just stand around. I like the smaller teams because the kids see me. (Formal Interview, pre-season)

Furthermore, students with disabilities in this study took their team role seriously. Out of four participants, three were equipment managers and one was the warm-up leader for their teams. These responsibilities were bestowed on them by their teams and the participants recognized their importance.

Kevin was absent yesterday and the equipment didn’t get taken out and the team lost play time when someone else had to run back inside and get what they needed. This bothered Kevin and when he returned to class he was very hurt that the equipment was not handled properly. He told me he had to make sure all the equipment was right today. (Field notes, Lesson 11)

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to highlight the voices of students with disabilities regarding their perceptions and experiences of participating in a season of Sport Education. The results of this study revealed that students with disabilities in Sport Education reported a high

level of social acceptance that manifested itself within the student-centered environment of this season. These findings are in line with Allport's (1954) Contact Theory which states that individuals must share equal status and have a common purpose in order to reduce prejudice. The inherent structure of Sport Education seemed to provide favorable conditions for all individuals on the team, including students with disabilities, to work together toward a common goal. Additionally, each member of the team in this season had distinct responsibilities that could not be fulfilled by others. Consequently, students with disabilities were able to recognize the importance of their team role, their playing role, and were able to fulfill them. This finding for students with disabilities is similar to previous research on students without disabilities who report taking their team responsibilities seriously and valuing being an important part of a team (Hastie, 1998; Hastie & Sinelnikov, 2006).

The requirements of this iteration of Sport Education, namely small group work in which everyone's contribution was important, allowed for a number of planned, structured, and purposeful interactions between students with disabilities and students without disabilities. These frequent interactions and perceived peer accountability seemed to contribute to reports by students with disabilities of greater social acceptance and the ability to voice opinions within their group. These findings lend support to Sherrill's (2004) assertion that positive attitudes are not formed unless interactions are planned and structured.

Physical activity, whether it is in school or otherwise, requires social interaction because it involves individuals sharing common space (Tripp & Sherrill, 2004). Findings from this study extend this notion of the significance of social interaction during Sport Education between students with and without disabilities in order to fulfill their team duties and playing

responsibilities. The shared common space allowed for physical proximity with others which made it easier for students with disabilities “to meet . . . other kids” and “make friends.”

The findings of this study provide further evidence to previous reports (Martin & Smith, 2002) that females with disabilities report stronger perceptions of the benefits from friendships than males. Alternatively for boys in this study, athletic ability and enthusiasm seemed to be a factor in the degree of their social acceptance. Kevin’s teammates seemed to accept him as their equal because he participated fully and was enthusiastic about his contribution to the team while the lower-skilled James had more difficulties achieving an equal status with his teammates. This finding further corroborates Sherrill’s (2004) assertions that athletic ability of boys with disabilities often determines the degree of their social acceptance.

The students with disabilities in this study were involved in a season of Sport Education. However, their level of participation was predicated on the degree of agreement between students without disabilities and students with disabilities about the responsibilities, the separation of responsibilities, and each other’s contribution to the team’s success. The unique requirements of Sport Education allowed for clear and easy delineation in these roles and responsibilities which subsequently facilitated a level of mutual agreement. According to Contact Theory, when such agreement was genuine, it resulted in greater involvement of students with disabilities in Sport Education season. These findings provide robust support for the premises of Contact Theory for the mutual and genuine agreement.

The results of this study demonstrated the complexities of examining the conceptions of student voice. The participation in a season of Sport Education allowed students with disabilities to be involved in an environment where communication was viewed as a two-way dialogue which was a prerequisite for meaningful inclusion (Robinson & Taylor, 2007). The requirements

of the model for all students to participate and provide a relative contribution to the team's success allowed students with disabilities in this study to have greater opportunities for involvement, learning, and social acceptance. The findings of this study demonstrated students with disabilities' perceptions of their greater participation in Sport Education which contradicted previous research in traditional physical education in which students with disabilities reported feeling excluded (Blinde & McCallister, 1998; Cefai & Cooper, 2010).

Having a student-centered curriculum gives the teacher an opportunity to impact all students within the classroom while focusing on a common goal (Ellis, Lieberman, & LeRoux, 2009). The findings of this study further validated this claim relative to students with disabilities. In this Sport Education season, students with disabilities reported that they had opportunities for shared involvement and to make contributions significant to their teams. However, similar to findings of Coates and Vickerman (2008), the level of such contributions varied among participants.

Another important finding of this study was the reported environment that allowed peer assistance in learning. There is empirical evidence that peer tutoring can be useful in physical education (Bond & Castagnera, 2010; Houston-Wilson et al., 1997; Johnson & Ward, 2001; Klavina, 2008; Klavina & Block, 2008). In the current study, students with disabilities responded positively to their peers assisting them in learning. This finding is significant because to date, there has only been one study that investigated peer teaching within Sport Education (Wallhead & O'Sullivan, 2007). The results from their study, albeit misalignment between intended and actual content, demonstrated that the instructional approach of peer teaching could be effective in developing participants' knowledge. While this study provided initial evidence of what students with disabilities think about peer instruction and their possible patterns of participation in a

season of Sport Education, the actual construct of peer instruction involving students with disabilities needs to be investigated further.

Johnson and Ward (2001), when investigating the effects of peer tutoring in traditional physical education classes, reported a reduction in the number of trials performed by students perhaps due to students taking more time to practice the skill and concentrating on correct performance. Whereas the examination of correct trials was not the focus of this study, the students with disabilities were afforded the help from their peers in correct skill performance and keeping on task because their participation was important to the success of the team.

Another avenue for future research may include the investigation of the influence of student status on social interaction between students. Brock, Rovegno, and Oliver (2009) observed a unit of Sport Education in which students with higher status dominated the social interactions during group work. The higher status of a student without disabilities in this study seemed to help elevate the status of the student with disabilities within the group because she was her friend. However, further studies could explore fair and equitable ways in which social interaction among students with and without disabilities could occur.

With large class sizes, physical education can be overwhelming to many, especially for students with disabilities which can lead to social isolation and social impairment (Obrusnikova & Dillon, 2011). This study provided initial evidence that students with disabilities felt included in a season of Sport Education. In this case, the inherent structure and implicit intentions of the Sport Education model to work within small teams toward a common goal may have provided favorable conditions for students with disabilities' voices to be heard.

Until recently, there has been a lack of research on what students with disabilities say about their being included in physical education that resembles real life sporting experiences.

The significance of this study was that in a season of Sport Education, it allowed voices of students with disabilities to be identified and their patterns of participation to be documented. This study, along with research by Fittipaldi-Wert, Brock, Hastie, Arnold, and Guarino (2009), demonstrated the potential as well as problems of inclusion of students with disabilities in a season of Sport Education, in an environment that would allow students with disabilities to play a legitimate role in sports.

The results of this study are only generalizable to these participants and to this season of Sport Education. The limited number of participants made it difficult to highlight a wide variety of voices from students with disabilities. The participants in this study had social and emotional disabilities, ASD and SLD, and there were no students with physical disabilities. Further research including participants with broader range of disabilities may be warranted.

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APPENDIX G  
IRB APPROVAL FORM

Office for Research  
Institutional Review Board for the  
Protection of Human Subjects

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA**  
R E S E A R C H

April 18, 2012

Allison Jackson  
Department of Kinesiology  
College of Education  
The University of Alabama

Re: IRB # 12-OR-136 "Inclusion of Students with Disabilities During a Season of Sport Education"

Dear Ms. Jackson:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

*(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.*

Your application will expire on April 17, 2013. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of the IRB Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved informed consent form to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



358 Rose Administration Building  
Box 870127  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0127  
(205) 348-8461  
fax (205) 348-7189  
TOLL FREE: (877) 820-3066

APPENDIX H  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**SUBJECT CONSENT FORM FOR  
PARTICIPATION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA**

**“THE VOICES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR PARTICIPATION  
IN A SEASON OF SPORT EDUCATION**

Investigator’s Name: Allison Jackson, doctoral student.

You are being asked to give permission for your child to take part in a research study.

The study is being done by a doctoral student, Allison Jackson, and her faculty advisors, Dr. Oleg Sinelnikov and Dr. Matthew Curtner-Smith, from The University of Alabama, Department of Kinesiology.

What is the purpose of this study--what are you trying to learn?

I hope to learn how physical education teachers and students with and without disabilities perceive using the Sport Education curriculum model as a means of including students with disabilities in their physical education class.

Why is this study important--what good will the results do?

The study will provide data for teachers on using the Sport Education curriculum model when including students with disabilities in their general physical education class. It should indicate what types of knowledge are important, what issues are considered significant, what decisions teachers make as they teach, what background knowledge impacts their ability to teach this curriculum, and what barriers and enablers exist over the course of teaching this curriculum. This understanding will hopefully help create a more positive atmosphere for physical education.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?

Students have been asked to participate in order to give voice to the literature directly from the students themselves.

How many other people will be in this study?

There will 3 physical education teachers in this study as well as any student, with or without disabilities, enrolled in the physical education class.

What will I be asked to do in this study?

As part of the study, you will be asked to give your perceptions of participating in physical education with students with disabilities during a season of Sport Education. I would like to observe and videotape 20 lessons and perform 2 interviews, one individual and one with your classmates who are also participating in the study. The interviews will last approximately 30 minutes and will be audio recorded. I would like your permission to use all of these data in the study described above.

How much time will I spend being in the study?

This study will require approximately 1 hour total outside of your classroom time with the remaining time being during your physical education class.

Will being in this study cost us anything?

The only cost to you is the time spent during the study.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Can the investigator take me out of this study?

The investigator may take you out of the study if she feels that the study is upsetting you or if something happens that means you no longer meet the study requirements.

What are the benefits to science or society?

This study will provide data to other teachers wishing to use the Sport Education curriculum model as a means of including students with disabilities in physical education. I am hoping to provide valuable information that will help create a more positive atmosphere for physical education teachers and their students.

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?

The nature of the data collection ensures that there is no physical or psychological risk of any kind to you.

How will my privacy be protected?

Only the researcher will know the identity of the participants and all data will be kept in a secure place for a maximum of 3 years at which time it will be destroyed.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

The audio recording of the interviews will be erased immediately after transcription. During that time, the recording will be stored in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's office. The data will be retained by the principal investigator for a period of 3 years. It will be kept locked in the principal investigator's office during that time. After 3 years, all data will be destroyed. The information provided by you will be confidential. In the event that the information collected is published in a professional journal, your confidentiality will be protected by referring to you only by pseudonym (fake name). On completion of the study the results will be made available and explained to you if you so desire.

Do I have to participate in this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time.

What if we have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints?

If you have any questions about this research contact: Allison Jackson at (205) 527-1074 or [ajackson4@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:ajackson4@crimson.ua.edu), Oleg Sinelnikov at (205)348-8363 or [osinelnikov@bamaed.ua.edu](mailto:osinelnikov@bamaed.ua.edu), or Matt Curtner-Smith at (205) 348-9209 or [msmith@bamaed.ua.edu](mailto:msmith@bamaed.ua.edu). Finally, if you have any questions about research participants' rights then you may contact Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer at the University of Alabama, at (205)348-5152.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at [http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO\\_Welcome.html](http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html) or email the Research Compliance office at [participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu](mailto:participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu).

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

I am asking for the signature of both parents. If, however, one parent is not reasonably available or one parent is not capable of providing permission, one parent signature is appropriate.

AUTHORIZATION: I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions. I agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for the interviews to be audio recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission for the interviews to be audio recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to know the results of the study and this is how you can contact me  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want to know the results of the study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for the lessons to be videotaped.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission for the lessons to be videotaped.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX I  
STUDENT ASSENT

## STUDENT ASSENT

### “THE VOICES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN A SEASON OF SPORT EDUCATION

Dear Student,

I am a graduate student at The University of Alabama. I am going to be visiting your physical education class very soon. I would like to videotape your class while you participate in flag football. I will be sitting on top of the bleachers or on the sidelines and will not be in the way of the class at all. I will only videotape the entire class; I will not single out any one student.

I would also like to interview several students within the class about including students with disabilities into the physical education class. I would like to talk with you individually before the season begins and then again with a group when it is over.

Please let me know if you will agree to participate in my study by checking the correct statement and signing below. We will use fictitious names, which you will choose, and no one except me will watch the videos.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for the interviews to be audio recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission for the interviews to be audio recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for the lessons to be videotaped.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission for the lessons to be videotaped.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX J  
PERMISSION TO VIDEOTAPE

**PERMISSION TO VIDEOTAPE**

**“THE VOICES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR PARTICIPATION  
IN A SEASON OF SPORT EDUCATION**

Dear Parent,

My name is Allison Jackson and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Kinesiology at The University of Alabama. I am conducting a study to explore perceptions of using the Sport Education curriculum model to include students with disabilities in the general physical education classes. Three of the teachers at your child’s school have been invited to participate in my study. I will come to the school and conduct passive observation in these teachers’ physical education classes for the duration a 20 lesson season. I would like your permission for it as well. The passive observation will only involve me sitting on the side of the gym and handwriting notes on my notebook. My visits will be on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. I will not interrupt the class at all.

In addition, I would like to videotape all lessons from an obscure location in the gym. There will be no compensation for any children or teachers in the video. There will be no penalties for children who do not wish to take part in the video. The physical education teacher will instruct the children whose parents do not want them to be in the video to do other physical activities on the other side of the gym.

I am asking for the signature of both parents. If, however, one parent is not reasonably available or one parent is not capable of providing permission, one signature is appropriate. Please sign below if you will allow your child to participate in the activities in which the video will be made. This video will be viewed only by the investigators of the study and will be destroyed when the study is complete.

Best Regards,

Allison Jackson  
Department of Kinesiology  
The University of Alabama  
Cell phone: (205) 527-1074  
Email: ajackson4@crimson.ua.edu

\_\_\_\_ Yes, you may include my child in the videotaped activity  
\_\_\_\_ No, please do not include my child in the videotaped activity  
Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Child’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX K  
FORMAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL,  
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

## **FORMAL INTERVIEW GUIDE STUDENTS**

The purpose of this study is to explore students' perceptions inclusion in physical education during a season of Sport Education. The first interview includes information regarding general background and demographic information. There are not right or wrong answers; be frank in your responses.

Background information (multiple prompts allowed)\*

How old are you?

How long have you attended this school?

Past experience in physical education

Tell me what physical education has been like for you.

Do you like to participate in physical activity?

When you participate, do you feel that other kids include you in the activity?

Do they include you because they have to or because they want you to play with them?

When you are in the activity, how much do you get to participate?

Do students pass you the ball?

Do you find yourself doing other things instead of participating?

Sport Education

Do you know what sport education is?

What kind of responsibilities have you had on the team?

What is your favourite?

Have you been the coach?

Do other kids pay attention to you and do as you ask them to?

Do the teachers give you a chance to do all of the jobs?

Do you get to play as much as the other kids do?

## CHAPTER III

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN SPORT EDUCATION

#### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to explore middle school physical education teachers' perceptions of using the Sport Education curriculum model to include students with disabilities in the general physical education classroom. Participants were three physical education teachers from one middle school in the southeastern part of the United States. Data collection included formal interviews with each teacher, videotaping of 20 lessons with field observations, informal discussions, focus group interviews, and a self-reflective daily journal. All interviews and videos were transcribed verbatim and all collected data were analyzed using analytic induction and constant comparison. The findings of this study indicated that the inclusion of students with disabilities in Sport Education is more likely when teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusion, carry out a significant amount of preparation of specific and tangible modifications for students with disabilities, engage in cooperative teaching that results in the increased levels of a subjective norm, and have a high degree of perceived behavioral control over the season. Teachers in this study also perceived the successful inclusion of students with disabilities when it promoted a sense of belonging and allowed students with disabilities to fulfill meaningful responsibilities during the course of Sport Education.

*Keywords:* inclusion, sport education, teacher perspective, students with disabilities

## **Physical Education Teachers' Perceptions of Including Students With Disabilities in Sport Education**

Including students with disabilities into the general education classroom allows them to be educated alongside of their peers (Rouse, 2009). According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), physical education is required for all children between the ages of 3 and 21 that require special education services because of a specific disabilities or developmental delay (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Students with disabilities are entitled to free, appropriate physical education that is equal to that of their non-disabled peers. Adapted physical education is designed to meet the unique physical needs of the students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (Columna, Davis, Lieberman, & Lytle, 2010). The LRE is the maximum extent to which the student with disabilities may participate in the general education classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

According to federal legislation, adapted physical education is included in the definition of special education. It was added to The Education for all Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) in 1990 and subsequently in the IDEIA (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Furthermore, physical education is a direct service and must be addressed on the individualized education program (IEP). To ensure that students with disabilities are given the opportunity to learn in their LRE in physical education, physical educators help classroom and special education teachers determine the best class in which to include students with disabilities. By using comprehensive assessment data, the IEP team can determine where students should be included in their LRE in the physical education classroom (Columna et al., 2010), though too often physical educators are left out of the IEP process altogether (Kowalski, Lieberman, & Daggett, 2006).

In order for inclusion to be a positive experience for all students and teachers, there must be strong advocacy efforts in place. Students, teachers, and administrators must all be willing to work together and have positive attitudes toward physical activity for all as well as being able to embrace human diversity in learning and appearance (Rouse, 2009). The benefits of participation in physical activity and sports to individuals with disabilities are well-documented and include reduction in anxiety and depression, increases self-esteem and self-efficacy, more positive perception of physical appearance, and the reduction in a risk of developing chronic diseases among others (Shepard, 1991; Steward, 1981).

In physical education classes, not only do students learn motor skills and how to be physically active, they also learn social skills (Standard 5, NASPE, 2004). In fact, a majority of physical education teachers (92%) believe that teaching social skills in physical education is an important part of the curriculum (Rouse, 2009; Samalot-Rivera & Porretta, 2009). Many researchers also believe that physical education is the best place for social skills to be taught to students with disabilities (Block, 2010; Hellison, 1990a, 1990b, 2003; McHugh, 1995; Moore, Cartledge, & Heckman, 1995; Sherrill, 2003; Slininger, Sherrill, & Jankowski, 2000; Vidoni, 2003). Unfortunately, many people without disabilities are reluctant to participate with students with disabilities in sport and physical activity because of fear, sympathy, or a lack of understanding toward the person (Eminovic, Nikic, Stojkovic & Pacic, 2009). Yet, in the school environment the influence of a teacher is hard to underestimate. Many scholars agree that the success of inclusion hinges upon one critical element, namely classroom environment created by the teacher (Hutzler, Fliess, Chacham, & Auweele, 2002; Lieberman, James, & Ludwa, 2004; Obrusnikova, Valkova, & Block, 2003; Smith, 2004).

Physical education teachers encounter many challenges throughout their work day and modifications and accommodations must be made for most learners (NASPE, 2009). For students with disabilities to be included in the general physical education class, appropriate modifications must be considered and made on a number of levels for each activity, task, rule, or equipment. There are a number of studies that discuss appropriate physical education for students with disabilities (Davis, Hodson, Zhang, Boswell, & Decker, 2010; Giacobbi, Stancil, Hardin, & Bryant, 2008; Jin & Yun, 2010; Pan, 2008) yet poor teaching practices are still evident in the field (Ennis, 2000). It is crucial for a teacher to know the ecology of their classroom, which students can participate fully, which students need modification, and the extent to which the modification should be made (Obrusnikova & Dillon, 2011).

Yet most physical education teachers have little or no formal training teaching students with disabilities (Morley, Bailey, Tan, & Cooke, 2005) and it is not surprising that they are most concerned about class management, time spent with students with disabilities, and behavioral issues of students with disabilities (Lienert, Sherrill, & Myers, 2001). Even the best conceived but poorly implemented inclusive practices can lead to a lack of student participation from both groups of students, with and without disabilities (Block, 1999; Place & Hodge, 2001) and, according to Place and Hodge (2001), lack of classroom management can lead to less time spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA). However, recently there are contemporary programs that have been specifically designed to optimize including students with disabilities into the general physical education class (Davis et al., 2010).

In the past decade, one curriculum model, namely Sport Education has received particularly favorable responses from teachers and students (Siedentop, 1998; Siedentop, Hastie & van der Mars, 2011) and is postulated by some scholars to have a real potential of providing

meaningful sporting experiences to students with disabilities (Fittipaldi-Wert, Brock, Hastie, Arnold, & Guarino, 2009; Foley, Tindall, Lieberman, & Kim, 2007; Lieberman et al., 2004; Tindall & Foley, 2011). Sport Education is a curriculum model intended to create a learning environment for which students take ownership of their learning and participation while providing authentic and contextualized sporting experience during regular physical education. Its goals are for students to become competent, literate, and enthusiastic sportspersons (Seidentop, 1998). Sport Education has six definitive characteristics. It uses modified games in a *season* which is typically longer than a traditional physical education unit allowing the teacher to give more in-depth instruction and the students to learn all aspects of the activity. Each player is *affiliated* with a specific team for the duration of the season which includes skill training, non-consequence competition, and *formal competition*. Throughout the season, the students keep and display their individual and team achievements in the form of public *records* while creating team names, shirts, and banners emphasizes the *festive* nature of the sport or activity. The season ends with a *culminating event* including a championship game with an awards ceremony following. Since its inception, there has been much research on the model with early findings comprehensively summarized by Wallhead and O'Sullivan (2005) and more recently by Hastie, de Ojeda, & Luquin (2011). The previous research on Sport Education has been favorable for physical education teacher education (Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2010) and students have demonstrated improvement of fitness (Hastie, Sluder, Buchanan & Wadsworth, 2009; Hastie & Trost, 2002), skill development, game play and tactical awareness (Browne, Carlson, & Hastie, 2004; Carlson & Hastie, 1997; Hastie & Curtner-Smith, 2006; Hastie, Sinelnikov, & Guarino, 2009; Pritchard, Hawkins, Wiegand, & Metzler, 2008), personal/social development and attitudes (Brock, Rovegno & Oliver, 2009; Kinchin, Wardle, Roderick & Sprosen, 2004;

MacPhail & Kinchin, 2004; Pill, 2008), and values like equity, affinity, and culture (Mowling, Brock, & Hastie, 2006; Siedentop et al., 2011; Vidoni & Ward, 2009). Other research emphasized outcomes that show improvement in content knowledge but not in skill itself (Pritchard et al., 2008).

It is the structure of Sport Education that seems to provide physical education teachers with opportunities for successful instruction. In Sport Education, students are involved in the planning, instruction, organization, implementation of the season, and play (Seidentop et al., 2011). This gives all students the opportunity to learn the value of learning all of the roles that are involved with an activity/sport. Sport Education also offers the teacher the ability to customize lesson plans to meet the needs of all individuals within the classroom. The games are modified using small teams and skill development is most often led by the students themselves which can be very beneficial to all students but especially to students with disabilities. Using trained peer tutors have shown to help students with disabilities improve motor performance (Houston-Wilson, Dunn, van der Mars, & McCubbin, 1997) and increase social development by encouraging positive relationships (Sinibaldi, 2001). Using trained peer-tutors in an inclusive setting can potentially give students with disabilities a role model that can help motivate them and get them into the action (Lieberman & Houston-Wilson, 2009).

Sport Education as a curriculum model is rather flexible (Siedentop et al, 2011) and open to adaptations. Moreover, “if rules and equipment can be adapted to fit students’ needs; so can instructional models” (Pressé, Block, Horton, & Harvey 2011, p. 32). Being a student-centered instructional model, Sport Education can help students with disabilities learn how to be physically active in a competitive or non-competitive activity and help them understand how to fully participate in the activity. Sport Education promotes personal development by giving all

students a role such as coach, scorekeeper, official, or others that is essential for the season to progress (Lieberman et al., 2004). It has been implemented with students with disabilities allowing students with visual impairment to have a positive, authentic sport experience by increasing their knowledge, skills, and their enjoyment (Fittipaldi-Wert et al., 2009). If students with disabilities are not able to perform the necessary skills or assigned responsibility, students along with the teachers help can work together to find a way so that all students can learn the skill. Students seem to be more supportive of each other because it helped the team achieve success when all students were able to perform the skills necessary for participation (Pill, 2010). Sport Education allows students of all abilities the experience of real-life situations so that through learning of skills and strategy the students experience empowerment (Hutzler et al., 2002).

### **Purpose of the Study**

There is emerging evidence of strategies to appropriately include students with disabilities in physical education; however, there is a lack of research that provides teachers' perspective of including students with disabilities into physical education using the model-based instructional approach. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore middle school physical education teachers' perceptions of using the Sport Education curriculum model to include students with disabilities in the general physical education classroom.

### **Theoretical Framework: Theory of Planned Behavior**

This study applied the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a framework because it connects individual beliefs with behavior and intention. TPB postulates that intentions can be used to predict behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991, 2005; Ajzen & Driver, 1992). In addition, the intention of a particular desired outcome is the motivating factor for behavior. It is an indication

of how much effort one will put into that behavior in order to achieve the desired outcome (Kudlacek, Valkova, Sherrill, Myers, & French, 2002). TPB has three determinants of intentions (Ajzen, 1991): (a) the attitude toward behavior-what does the person think of the behavior initially?, (b) the subjective norm-what are the social pressures to or not to perform the behavior?, and (c) what is the degree of perceived behavioral control? One could ask the question, “Will it be easy or difficult to perform the desired behavior?”

Fundamentally, the more favorable the attitude, subjective norm, and perceived control, the stronger the intention to perform in a positive manner. In order for students without disabilities to engage with students with disabilities, teachers must promote awareness of the benefits of interacting with peers who are different from each other (Obrusnikova & Dillon, 2011) as well as encourage a sense of belonging among all students (Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010). By structuring students’ tasks and roles so that all students make a contribution to the goals of the classroom, positive interaction helps highlight strengths and learn from weaknesses. Teachers must be clear in their expectations of the behavior among all students; making sure that negative comments and feelings are not brought into the activity.

## **Method**

### **Participants and Settings**

The participants of this study were three physical education teachers that had 7 (Martina), 6 (James), and 3 (Marcus) years of experience. All three teachers held a master’s degree in physical education. One of the teachers was working toward earning a doctoral degree. The middle school (sixth through eighth grade) in which the study took place was located in a small town in the southeastern region of the United States with approximately 800 students enrolled. It has a standard-sized gymnasium and ample outdoor space for physical education classes. The

participants were purposefully selected because their physical education curriculum included Sport Education (Siedentop et al., 2011). The lead teacher was the primary user of Sport Education; however, the other two teachers implemented a “watered down” version at times (Curtner-Smith, Hastie, & Kinchin, 2008).

### **Sport Education Flag Football Season**

The teachers co-taught a 21-lesson (50 min. lesson) season of flag football designed and implemented according to key tenets of Sport Education (Siedentop et al., 2011). Sixty-six seventh grade students aged 12-13 comprised nine constant teams which practiced and then formally competed in round robin and then play-offs for World Championship. The season outline is presented in Table 5. Team roles in this season included coach, warm-up leader, equipment manager, scorekeeper, and statistician. There were four students with intellectual and behavioral disabilities who participated in the season as members of various teams.

Table 5

#### *Flag Football Sport Education Season*

Lessons	Phase of Season	Content
1-3	Pre-season	Team formation Name, mascot, poster Team Roles Coach, asst. coach, equipment manager,
4-6	Warm-up leader, statistician Pre-season	Teaching Positions, play design, fundamental skills Playbook creation Skill Practice
7-9	Pre-season	Teaching Defense, offense, team strategy Skill Practice Work on plays Pre-season tournament

*(table continues)*

Lessons	Phase of Season	Content
10-15	Formal Competition	Mini games Team practice
16-20	Tournament Play	Seeded Tournament Team Practice
21	Culminating Event	Championship Game

### **Data Collection**

Data collection took place during a flag football season of Sport Education and included the following qualitative techniques: in-depth interviews with each of the teachers, video-taping of 21 lessons with field observations, informal discussions, focus group interviews and a self-reflective daily journal.

The in-depth interview was used as a primary means to garner meaningful experiences of the participant in their own words (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Fontana & Frey, 1994). An individual interview (see Appendix M) was conducted with each participant at the beginning of the season and each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. The researcher was located in an inconspicuous location in order to observe and videotape all Sport Education season lessons and take field observation notes. In addition, informal discussions with participants took place throughout the study, mostly before or after classes, which provided further insight and clarifications to events that happened during class.

The focus group interview was held near the end of the season with all three teachers and lasted approximately 90 minutes. A focus group interview was considered appropriate for this study given McQuarrie and McIntyre's (1990) suggestion that group interviews were superior to individual interviews when the objective was examination of commonly held attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The focus group afforded the teachers an opportunity to share their determinants of intentions such as attitudes and feelings, social pressures, and degree of perceived and

behavior control on the use of Sport Education and students with disabilities. Lastly, the teachers kept a self-reflective daily journal for the duration of the Sport Education season where they were asked to write about meaningful situations or events that occurred during the day's events. Journals were used as a comfortable medium for teachers to express their thoughts and ideas that may not otherwise be expressed during focus group discussions or individual interviews (Oliver, 1999).

The appropriate approval of the author's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix ) of this study was obtained prior to its commencement, permission was granted by the school and county administration, and all teachers involved in the study gave informed consent (see Appendices ).

### **Data Analysis**

Collected data was reviewed and analyzed using analytic induction and constant comparison methods (Creswell, 2007; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Themes and categories were developed by comparing all data gathered. Trustworthiness of the data came from recurring information that was triangulated between all of the methods and any information that indicated discrepancy was not used. Transcriptions of individual interviews and focus group interview were given to the participants to check for accuracy to assure that the final information was true and agreeable with all of the participants.

### **Results**

From observations, interviews, and journal entries, a strong picture of teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities in a season of Sport Education emerged. The major findings were positive attitudes toward inclusion, significance of a priori planning, creating a

sense of belonging for all students, and allowing students to take responsibility for their roles on the team.

### **Positive Attitudes Toward Inclusion**

There was a consensus among all participants that “. . . making sure that all students, with and without disabilities, participated in the activities and learned new skills.” There seemed to be a shared positive attitude among teachers in the study toward including students with disabilities in all parts of physical education which carried over into the Sport Education season. During the individual interview, Martina suggested,

I think they [students with disabilities] should be included, they all get in and do what everyone else does. They enjoy it and want to be with all of the kids. They mix well with other students and it makes them feel like all other kids.

The observations seemed to confirm this notion of teachers attempting to include students with disabilities. There were numerous instances where the teachers repeatedly engaged students with disabilities with their peers. A typical exchange is exemplified in the following scenario:

In pre-season, teacher moved students with disabilities into their group and began working on posters and mascots within their groups. Students without disabilities are in charge of the group but the teacher made it clear that all students need to be contributing in drawing and coloring the poster. She later came back to make sure that everyone's input is considered. (Field Notes, Day 1)

In fact, including students with disabilities was routine and just “a matter of course” for these teachers. Marcus even opined,

But I will say this, it's not the kids with disabilities that we have to focus on. It's the kids that could care less about doing anything, or that don't care for PE that we have to coax in and it's their relationships with the other teams that we spend a lot of time with.

Two out of the three teachers commented that they felt as though they were adequately prepared to include students with disabilities in their physical education class. A portion of this confidence was attributed to their participation in adapted physical education courses as well as courses in

special education during their undergraduate studies. When asked about her feeling of preparedness to teaching students with disabilities, Martina answered with unequivocal “absolutely.” James seconded Martina’s feelings saying, “I felt as though I was professionally prepared.”

In contrast, Marcus reported to not have had any adapted physical education courses during his professional training. He said “I had not planned on teaching when I went to college. Now when I did my master’s, I did a fifth year program and I had a couple of special ed courses.” Subsequently, he didn’t feel as though he had as much opportunity to be prepared prior to teaching students with disabilities. However, Marcus attributed his positive attitude toward inclusion to his experience of having previously taught students with disabilities and relying on peer instruction from students without disabilities stating

I like them to be included . . . I prefer for them to be involved. Let’s say I have a kid who is in a group with someone with a physical or mental disability, they know that and those kids help them and they will buddy up.

### **Significance of A Priori Planning**

Participants in this study agreed that for successful inclusion of students with disabilities into the Sport Education season, it was necessary to have a well-thought out season and lesson plans. First, when laying out the yearly curriculum, teachers chose the activities and the types of curriculum they wanted to use for each. Martina said, “(w)e use Sport Education in . . . team sports; we don’t use Sport Education in sports they aren’t familiar with.” Teachers thought this initial familiarity with flag football may give students with disabilities an opportunity to succeed since they have participated in a flag football unit previously. Once teachers decided on a sport, they agreed on the organization of the season and what activities and tasks to include. Subsequently, unit plans were made to ensure the proper length of time was spent teaching and

to allow ample time for practice. There was a shared sentiment among teachers that including students with disabilities in Sport Education required more work, especially prior to the beginning of the season. Comments like, “it’s a lot of work up front, but once it gets rolling it’s just maintenance” and “if you aren’t organized from the beginning, it can get pretty hard” were common throughout the season.

Additionally, teachers noted that they had carried out shared planning sessions before the season began. Team selection was an important consideration before the season. Bobby mentioned, “We have to figure out how many kids we have and divide them up into teams, make sure they are even.” It was especially significant in placing students with disabilities on their respective teams. In this season, teachers purposefully chose to allocate students to their teams themselves. Careful considerations were given to the nature of students’ disabilities and a potential for positive cooperation between teammates. In selecting teammates for students with disabilities, James said,

We have a lot of great kids here and that will help them embrace students with disabilities and help them be involved and realize that this is fun and give them an opportunity for the well-abled kid to work on his skill of begin kind and showing how things are supposed to be and helping others.

The teachers also pointed out that the nature of the model allowed them to seamlessly include students with disabilities into the season because “the structure is already there, we just help them implement it.”

In this season of Sport Education, all three teachers were implementing the unit simultaneously and therefore it became paramount to hold regular meetings to discuss the planning and administration of the season. Describing their typical meetings, Marcus said,

We start with a physical education meeting and discuss what we will do and lay the plan out and we have just make a list of what everybody’s responsibility will be as a team and we kind of decide what we want those teams to do.

All teachers seemed to be in agreement about recognizing the importance of appropriate planning. James voiced this shared sentiment, “Everything has to be done beforehand, and if it isn’t, you will lose track of it and you will be making corrections to brackets and stuff later.”

### **Creating a Sense of Belonging for all Students**

The team affiliation was evident during this season. Students began their season by separating into teams, naming their teams, and choosing roles (Field Notes, Day 1), making posters with a picture of their mascot (Field Notes, Day 3), and creating t-shirts representative of their team (Field Notes, Day 9). Students remained on the same team for the entire season (Field Notes, Days 1-21) which could have “provided students [with disabilities] the opportunity to become familiar with others” and “work together to get better on the field.”

The teachers in this study all agreed that belonging to a group in class provided an opportunity for students with disabilities to “get to know other students on a different level.” Moreover, it provided them “the opportunity to be among a group of their peers in an active setting that fostered learning and relationship building.” Furthermore, Martina suggested that students with disabilities “might not have gotten to know a certain person if they weren’t on the same team.”

Additionally, the social interactions between students were often purposeful. For example, a team manager had to communicate with a coach regarding what equipment to carry out on the field (Field Notes, Days 4-9). Teachers suggested that this purposeful interaction allowed students with disabilities to feel a sense of meaningful contribution to the team thus encouraging them to perform their roles correctly. In fact, working with students without disabilities was cited as one avenue of achieving a sense of belonging for students with disabilities. As Marcus reiterated,

Getting those kids [students without disabilities] that are on that specific team to help them [students with disabilities] to understand their role, to make that kid to feel special, to make that kid to feel a part. Here, meaning at the school, we have a lot of great kids that would embrace that.

The teams in this Sport Education season consisted of seven or eight players (Field Notes, Day 1). Martina suggested that having smaller groups of students (teams) may have “helped students with disabilities communicate more with teammates.” Furthermore, the accomplishments of students with disabilities were more likely to be noticed by their peers. As James observed, “When we do something and the student with disabilities does something good, it’s noticed by everyone on the team and it is genuine. They [teammates] notice it and it makes your heart feel good.”

Being affiliated with a team and having responsibilities that mattered, from teachers’ perspectives, promoted the inclusive environment of the Sport Education season. James further elaborated on this point, “I feel good about that part of what we do. I believe that they [students with disabilities] enjoy their time and they are a part. They don’t just feel a part, they ARE a part!”

Martina seconded James’ notion of her perceptions of students with disabilities enjoying Sport Education adding,

I think students with disabilities enjoy it [Sport Education]. They mix well with other students and I think it makes them feel included and reinforces that they, just like all the other kids, enjoy being around each other and that they have friends.

### **Allowing Students to Take Responsibility for Their Roles on the Team**

All of the teachers agreed that it was a challenge for them to become comfortable with relinquishing control over the activities.

One of the common problems in Sport Education is letting go of the control of teaching and being in charge . . . and things that you want to do, you want to be the center of it,

instead of the kids being the center. Planning the activities that the kids can be in control of and be responsible for is difficult. (Martina)

Teachers felt as though “you want to empower the kids” and “you gotta trust kids to do what they are supposed to do.” This was especially true in the case of students with disabilities; however, teachers acknowledged that “most of the kids did a good job with their responsibility on their team.” Importantly, students with disabilities were not singled out, since everyone’s contribution was just as equally important. During the focus group interview, Marcus suggested,

The best part of Sport Education is that all students had some type of responsibility, their contribution to the team that they had control over. It didn’t really matter who the student was, they had a job to do and they were going to do it. Students take pride in contributions they make to the class.

However, when holding students accountable and making sure that the non-playing roles were performed, James suggested that a challenge encountered daily was with “kids who were not interested and didn’t want to take responsibility.” In these cases, the teachers had to find ways to “get them excited” about their roles.

Susan [a female student with autism] complained today that she didn’t like football. She carries the equipment out to the field complaining the whole time. The teacher quickly asked the coach to make sure that everyone’s accomplishments were recognized. When Susan got to the field, the other students thanked her for bringing the equipment for the team. She immediately stopped complaining and engaged in team practice. (Field Notes, Day 5)

Moreover, teachers seemed to think that “the roles held them [students with disabilities] accountable and they knew what the expectations were” and when they were successful “it gave them a sense of pride.”

Another responsibility that the students with disabilities had was their learning during skill practice and performance in games. Teachers noted that Sport Education “gave teams more responsibility to practice on their own,” which allowed peers to work individually with students with disabilities.

Team leaders are helping Kevin with the plays. They put him into place and tell him what his job is, sometimes he gets it right and other times he looks lost. The coach takes a long time to set up and talk through plays. (Field Notes, Day 6)

Furthermore, belonging to a team may have also helped students with disabilities in this study to have an established routine in a physical education class. For instance, co-leading the warm up for her team before each class “became part of Susan’s routine and she knew what to expect every day.” All teachers reported that having that constant routine helped with behavior management since students with disabilities “knew every day when they came into physical education they had a direction.”

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to explore middle school physical education teachers’ perceptions of using the Sport Education curriculum model to include students with disabilities in the general physical education classroom. The major findings of the study supported the tenets of the Theory of Planned Behavior and therefore the discussion is organized according to its three determinants of intentions: attitudes toward behavior, subjective norm, and the degree of perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991).

### **Attitudes Toward Behavior**

The findings of this study revealed that all participants had general positive attitudes toward inclusion. Similar to previous research (Folsom-Meek & Nearing, 1999; Kowalski & Rizzo, 1996), the educational preparation of teachers in this study seemed to predict their positive attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities. The two teachers who took undergraduate courses in adaptive physical education felt more confident early in their career while the third teacher felt more positive after a series of successful teaching experiences with students with disabilities. Therefore, the results of this study demonstrated that the participants

could feel adequately prepared for including students with disabilities after their professional training or experience teaching students with disabilities. This finding further validated Hardin's (2005) and Rust and Sinelnikov's (2010) assertions that teaching experience and learning from other teachers were the main sources of practicing physical education teachers' knowledge acquisition for teaching students with disabilities.

The Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that one should have the ability to predict another's intentions of behavior which are influenced by attitude (Ajzen, 1991). Findings from this study confirmed this theoretical postulate as the teachers' initial positive attitudes toward including students with disabilities resulted in their intention to fully incorporate them into a season of Sport Education. The intention manifested itself in a significant degree of planning and preparations carried out before and during the season. Recognizing that a dysfunction of planning and structure was, many times, the downfall of a quality physical education program (Alexander, Taggart, & Thorpe, 1996), in this study, participants carried out a significant amount of preparation before the commencement of the season and understood the importance of appropriate planning for conducting a quality Sport Education season and including students with disabilities.

Research on planning behaviors of expert and novice teachers proposed that more experienced teachers display an understanding of the need for detailed and comprehensive lesson plans so that accommodations for any situation could be made (Solmon & Lee, 1991). The teachers in this study confirmed this notion and additionally suggested that extra planning was required a priori to meaningfully accommodate students with disabilities in a season of Sport Education.

Contrary to previous research, documenting that students with disabilities have limited social interaction with students without disabilities in the general physical education classroom (Ellis, Wright, & Cronis, 1996; Lisboa, 1997; Place & Hodge, 2001), the shared positive teacher attitudes about including students with disabilities in Sport Education in this study allowed them to plan for and create an environment in which social interactions between students with and without disabilities were frequent, purposeful, and meaningful. Since limited interaction can lead to social isolation (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000) and students' social skills can be improved through inclusion in a motivating environment (Suomi, Collier, & Brown, 2003), this finding provides further evidence for Pill's (2008) inference that Sport Education may create an environment of enhanced inclusion as well as the development of personal and social skills for students with disabilities. Overall, the data in this study suggested that having positive attitudes toward inclusion in general allowed teachers to prepare for and incorporate students with disabilities in Sport Education.

### **Subjective Norm**

Students with disabilities are entitled to free and appropriate physical education equitable to that of students without disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) and for teachers in this study to include them in physical education was "a matter of course." In addition, since all three teachers were teaching the unit at the same time, there was an underlying expectation for each one to be prepared for every lesson. Part of being prepared for the lesson encompassed having a plan for the inclusion of students with disabilities. While covert, this social pressure to be prepared for each lesson seemed to come from the sense of individual accountability to the other two teachers.

Moreover, the significant joint effort of planning and conducting a season of Sport Education to include students with disabilities was ultimately the key to achieving a desired outcome of a successful season, which is often the case with joint efforts (Kudlacek et al., 2002). The finding of shared planning and execution of Sport Education supports previous reports of physical education teachers spending a significant amount of time working cooperatively when implementing Sport Education (Sinelnikov, 2009) and provides initial evidence to a shared sense of accountability among teachers. This sense of accountability seemed to account for the subjective norm for teachers in this study as one of the determinants of their intentions of including students with disabilities in Sport Education. Notably, the social pressure from administration to include students with disabilities in physical education was absent from teachers' perspectives in this study, which further validates the notions of marginality of the subject of physical education in the school (e.g., Hastie, Sanders, & Rowland, 1999; Locke, 1992; O'Sullivan, 1989).

Within the structure of this Sport Education season, teachers were able to create subjective norms of positive social pressures. This was accomplished in part by creating a sense of belonging for all students in the class which was facilitated by the requirement of Sport Education for team affiliation. Previous studies in Sport Education reported significant degrees of team affiliation among students without disabilities (Hastie, 1996; Sinelnikov & Hastie, 2008) as well as students with disabilities (Fittipaldi-Wert et al., 2009). As Foley et al. (2007) previously suggested, this season of Sport Education also offered students with disabilities the opportunity to participate in team sports they may not have outside of their physical education program.

Yet another positive social pressure created by physical education teachers in this Sport Education season was the requirement for students to take responsibility for their playing roles and roles on the team. This feature of Sport Education allowed an environment conducive for participation by all students and offered them a chance to learn alongside of each other. When students have a positive attitude toward physical activity, believe that other students feel they should participate in the activity, and believe they have the ability to participate, they will be more likely to form a strong intention toward the desire to participate (Mummery, Spence, & Hudec, 2000). In the current study, teachers reported attempting to create a Sport Education environment that would promote these determinants of intention.

### **Degree of Perceived Behavioral Control**

The teachers in the study reported that the salient structural features of Sport Education allowed them to have a high degree of perceived behavioral control. This high degree of perceived behavioral control seemed to allow the teachers to create and implement a flexible Sport Education season that allowed for the inclusion of students with disabilities. The salient features pertinent to the inclusion of students with disabilities specifically included social interaction, peer instruction, and team responsibilities.

The social interaction among different groups of people in Sport Education can provide an atmosphere “that can accommodate students’ social agenda in a way that encourages high levels of student investment” (Hastie, 1998, p. 24). The significance of student social system in Sport Education has been reported in previous research employing the classroom ecology paradigm (Carlson & Hastie, 1997; Sinelnikov & Hastie, 2008, 2012). However, a notable finding of this study, and the one that has not been previously reported, was that teachers reported a noteworthy level of interaction between students with and without disabilities. It is

also important to note that while some of these interactions were purposefully planned, all were facilitated by the inherent structure of Sport Education in which socializing “is developed through the objective of working as a team” (Sinelnikov & Hastie, 2012, p. 253). Nevertheless, the notion of the nature of such interactions between students with and without disabilities need be investigated further.

Pressé et al. (2011) suggested that students without disabilities could help create modifications for students with disabilities in order to level the playing field. However, in this study, teachers reported that they had difficulties relinquishing control over the activities to the students. It is not surprising since most teachers in the United States as well as other countries primarily use a teacher-centered curriculum model and feel more in control when they are the primary leader in the classroom (Cothran et al., 2005). The finding of the current study also support previous research on practicing teachers implementing Sport Education (Sinelnikov, 2009) in which teachers had challenges in delegating tasks to students and therefore handing over control of the gym to students.

It can be theorized that one of the reasons for difficulties in relinquishing control over some activities was teachers’ concern for appropriate modifications. When activities are modified appropriately, students without disabilities are more receptive to accommodating students with disabilities (Kalyvas & Reid, 2003). In this season, having students without disabilities help with modifications for students with disabilities allowed for student “buy-in” but in turn contributed to the teachers’ perception of a decrease in the degree of behavioral control.

Moreover, in this study the implementation of Sport Education season was perceived by teachers to be easier overall albeit difficult in the beginning. The challenges in the beginning of the season were attributed to increased planning and organizational constraints; however, once

the season was under way, the teaching became easier since the role of the teacher became more that of a facilitator. These findings mirror major postulates of Sport Education in which responsibilities are progressively shifted from the teacher to students during the course of the season (Siedentop et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the teachers in this study reported having to specifically plan for peer instruction opportunities during Sport Education. The peer tutor situations are encouraged by previous research in physical education since individual instruction increases academic learning time (DePaepe, 1985; Webster, 1987; Wiskochil, Lieberman, Houston-Wilson, & Peterson, 2007), increases leadership experiences among others (Rink, 1998), stimulates socialization (Ernst & Byra, 1998), and since equality among others encourages positive relationships (Sinibaldi, 2001). Yet, peer instruction in Sport Education still remains under-researched (Hastie et al., 2011). In this study, the perceived degree of behavioral control by teachers reflected their ability to plan and utilize peer instruction for the benefit of students with disabilities within the organization of a team in Sport Education. Additional research seems warranted to further explore the benefits and drawbacks of peer instruction between students with and without disabilities in a season of Sport Education.

Sport Education has been substantiated as an appropriate curriculum in general physical education today (see reviews by Alexander & Luckman, 2001; Deenihan, McPhail, & Young, 2011; Hastie et al., 2011; Wallhead & O'Sullivan, 2005) and this study adds to the empirical evidence confirming the value of Sport Education when including students with disabilities. Additionally, the Theory of Planned Behavior was deemed as a useful theoretical framework when investigating teachers' perceptions about including students with disabilities in Sport

Education since “a central factor in the theory of planned behavior is the individual’s intention to perform a given behavior” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181).

To summarize, when considering the findings of this study it may be theorized that the inclusion of students with disabilities in Sport Education is more likely when teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusion, carry out a significant amount of preparation of specific and tangible modifications for students with disabilities, engage in cooperative teaching that results in the increased levels of a subjective norm, and have a high degree of perceived behavioral control over the season. Teachers in this study also perceived the successful inclusion of students with disabilities promoted a sense of belonging and allowed students with disabilities to fulfill meaningful responsibilities during the course of Sport Education. These findings lend credence to Kodish, Kulinna, Martin, Pangrazi, and Darst’s (2006, p. 404) contention that when using “a solid curriculum,” physical education can be a positive experience for all students.

This study is not without its limitations. First, it has limitations that are similar to those found in qualitative studies. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to other participants and settings. Additionally, the participants in this study represented one particular physical education department at a middle school; therefore, the results are not generalizable across different grades of students. Second, the students with disabilities who participated in this Sport Education season had intellectual and/or behavioral disabilities. While Fittipalidi-Wert et al. (2009) provided initial research evidence of using Sport Education with students who were blind in the camp setting, future research including students with physical disabilities in physical education could afford additional insight on teachers’ perceptions of including students with disabilities.

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APPENDIX L  
IRB APPROVAL FORM

Office for Research  
Institutional Review Board for the  
Protection of Human Subjects

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA**  
R E S E A R C H

April 18, 2012

Allison Jackson  
Department of Kinesiology  
College of Education  
The University of Alabama

Re: IRB # 12-OR-136 "Inclusion of Students with Disabilities During a Season of Sport Education"

Dear Ms. Jackson:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

*(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.*

Your application will expire on April 17, 2013. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of the IRB Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved informed consent form to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



358 Rose Administration Building  
Box 870127  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0127  
(205) 348-8461  
fax (205) 348-7189  
TOLL FREE: (877) 820-3066

APPENDIX M  
INFORMED CONSENT,  
PHYSICAL EDUCATION

**SUBJECT CONSENT FORM FOR  
PARTICIPATION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA**

**“PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUDING STUDENTS  
WITH DISABILITIES IN SPORT EDUCATION**

**Investigator’s Name:** Allison Jackson, doctoral student.

**You are being asked to be a participant in a research study.**

This study is called “Including Students with Disabilities into a Season of Sport Education”

**The study is being done** by a doctoral student, Allison Jackson, and her faculty advisors, Dr. Oleg Sinelnikov and Dr. Matthew Curtner-Smith, from The University of Alabama, Department of Kinesiology.

**What is the purpose of this study--what are you trying to learn?**

I hope to learn how physical education teachers and students with and without disabilities perceive using the Sport Education curriculum model as a means of including students with disabilities in their physical education class.

**Why is this study important--what good will the results do?**

The study will provide data for teachers on using the Sport Education curriculum model when including students with disabilities in their general physical education class. It should indicate what types of knowledge are important, what issues are considered significant, what decisions teachers make as they teach, what background knowledge impacts their ability to teach this curriculum, and what barriers and enablers exist over the course of teaching this curriculum. This understanding will hopefully help create a more positive atmosphere for physical education.

**Why have I been asked to be in this study?**

Teachers have been asked to participate because of your knowledge and use of the Sport Education curriculum model. Students have been asked to participate in order to give voice to the literature directly from the students themselves.

**How many other people will be in this study?**

There will be 3 physical education teachers in this study as well as any student, with or without disabilities, enrolled in the physical education class.

**What will I be asked to do in this study?**

As part of the study, you will be asked to give your perceptions of teaching students with disabilities, the use of the Sport Education curriculum model and share a reflective daily journal of your lessons. I would like to observe and videotape 20 lessons and perform 2 interviews, one individual and one with your colleagues who are also participating in the study. The interviews will last approximately 30 minutes and will be audio recorded. I would like your permission to use all of these data in the study described above.

**How much time will I spend being in the study?**

This study will require approximately 1 hour total outside of your classroom time with the remaining time being during your physical education class.

**Will being in this study cost us anything?**

The only cost to you is the time spent during the study.

**Will I be compensated for being in this study?**

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

**Can the investigator take me out of this study? *(If appropriate for the topic)***

The investigator may take you out of the study if she feels that the study is upsetting you or if something happens that means you no longer meet the study requirements.

**What are the benefits to science or society?**

This study will provide data to other teachers wishing to use the Sport Education curriculum model as a means of including students with disabilities in physical education. I am hoping to provide valuable information that will help create a more positive atmosphere for physical education teachers and their students.

**What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?**

The nature of the data collection ensures that there is no physical or psychological risk of any kind to you.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Only the researcher will know the identity of the participants and all data will be kept in a secure place for a maximum of 3 years at which time it will be destroyed.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**

The audio recording of the interviews will be erased immediately after transcription. During that time, the tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's office. The data will be retained by the principal investigator for a period of 3 years. It will be kept locked in the principal investigator's office during that time. After 3 years, all data will be destroyed. The information provided by you will be confidential. In the event that the information collected is published in a professional journal, your confidentiality will be protected by referring to you only by pseudonym (fake name). On completion of the study the results will be made available and explained to you if you so desire.

**Do I have to participate in this study?**

Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time.

**What if we have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints?**

If you have any questions about this research contact: Allison Jackson at (205) 527-1074 or [ajackson4@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:ajackson4@crimson.ua.edu), Oleg Sinelnikov at (205)348-8363 or [osinelnikov@bamaed.ua.edu](mailto:osinelnikov@bamaed.ua.edu),

or Matt Curtner-Smith at (205) 348-9209 or msmith@bamaed.ua.edu. Finally, if you have any questions about research participants' rights then you may contact Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer at the University of Alabama, at (205)348-5152.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at [http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO\\_Welcome.html](http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html) or email the Research Compliance office at [participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu](mailto:participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu).

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

**AUTHORIZATION:** I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions. I agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for the interviews to be audio recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission for the interviews to be audio recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to know the results of the study and this is how you can contact me

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want to know the results of the study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for the lessons to be videotaped.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission for the lessons to be videotaped.

Teacher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX N  
FORMAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

## FORMAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

### “PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN SPORT EDUCATION”

The purpose of this interview will be to explore middle school physical education teachers' perceptions of using the Sport Education curriculum model to include students with disabilities in the general physical education classes. The first interview is on general background and demographic information. There are not right or wrong answers; be frank in your responses.

#### **Background information (multiple prompts allowed)\***

- How old are you?
- Where were you born?
- What is your race?
- What is your gender?
- What is your ethnic origin?

\*No need to ask questions in this section when answers are obvious

#### **Experience working with children with and without disabilities**

- Tell me what experience you have working with children?
- What ages?
- What setting (school, private lesson, coaching, after school program, summer camp, etc.)?
- How were you involved in working with children (coach, volunteer, substitute teacher, etc.)?
- Please describe what exactly your duties were.

#### **History in Physical Education**

- Was your experience in physical education beneficial in grade school?
- What type of curriculum model did your physical education teachers use?
- What experience stood out the most about your physical education class, positive and negative?
- Did you feel successful in physical education?
- Are there any teachers that you would like to model when you become a teacher?
- Is there anyone in your family that is a teacher? If so, what subject?

#### **Teaching Sport Education**

- Are you teaching Sport Education now?
- What seasons are you currently teaching? If not teaching, why?
- How do you prepare for teaching Sport Education?
- What information is useful? What information is not useful?
- What support do you have when preparing to implement Sport Education? What helps you?
- What difficulties/challenges arise when you prepare to implement Sport Education? What hinders your preparation?

- What support do you have when implementing Sport Education? What helps you?
- What difficulties/challenges arise when you implement Sport Education? What hinders your implementation?
- What support do you have after teaching Sport Education?
- What difficulties/challenges arise after you teach Sport Education?

### **Teaching Students with Disabilities**

- Approximately how many students with disabilities do you teach each year?
- Are your SWD always included with general physical education classes or are they sometimes self-contained?
- Do you prefer them to be included or have their own physical education class? Why?
- To what extent do the SWD participate with the class?
- Do you have any of the SWD work independently or with partners?
- When you were in college, how many special education courses were required in your curriculum?
- Do you feel that you are adequately prepared professionally to include SWD into the general physical education class?
- How do you think SWD feel about being included into the general physical education class?
- How do you think SWOD feel about SWD being included into general physical education class?
- Do SWOD truly include SWD when it comes right down to it?
- Do they look to have SWD on teams or partners or do they do it only when they are told to?
- Do you feel that SWD are able to truly improve on their skills in the general physical education class?
- What are some of the strategies that you use with SWD?  
How do they respond to your program?