

5-1996

Adapting Games, Sports and Recreation for Children and Adults who are Deaf-Blind

Lauren J. Lieberman

The College at Brockport, llieberm@brockport.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/pes_facpub

 Part of the [Disability and Equity in Education Commons](#), [Health and Physical Education Commons](#), and the [Sports Studies Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Lieberman, Lauren J., "Adapting Games, Sports and Recreation for Children and Adults who are Deaf-Blind" (1996). *Kinesiology, Sport Studies and Physical Education Faculty Publications*. 111.

https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/pes_facpub/111

Citation/Publisher Attribution:

Lieberman, L.J. (1996). Adapting games, sports and recreation for children and adults who are deaf-blind. *Deaf-Blind Perspectives*, 3(3), 5-8.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Kinesiology, Sport Studies and Physical Education at Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in Kinesiology, Sport Studies and Physical Education Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact kmyers@brockport.edu.

ties and programs so they will meet unique needs and provide fun and healthy exercise for all who participate. The purpose of this article is to encourage parents, teachers, professionals, therapists, and consumers, to set up and adapt recreation activities and programs to meet the needs of all children and adults.

Important Rules

As for any other child or adult, the expectations for the person who is deaf-blind should be high. To provide every opportunity for the person who is deaf-blind to meet these high expectations, there are some important rules of thumb to follow when developing and adapting activities.

- Utilize the concept of Ecological Task Analysis (Davis & Burton, 1991). Ecological Task Analysis suggests that aspects of motor performance emerge from the constraints of the performer, the environment, and the task. Manipulating one or more of these three constraints will move the individual towards success. Participants should be afforded the opportunity to use a variety of equipment, and be given choices about how to optimally perform the desired activity. This will allow the individual, when possible, to have input on the type and extent of adaptations made.
- Link movement to language (Van Dijk, 1966). Once the child knows the movement and what it is called, he or she has the potential to execute the skill independently.
- Remember that partial participation is better than no participation (Block, 1992). Even moderate, significant, or total physical assistance to participate in an activity, is better than no participation at all. The person assisting can be a peer, sibling, teacher, or volunteer.
- Always begin with the smallest amount of assistance that will ensure desired performance and success (Lieberman, 1995). Then, assistance and adaptations should naturally be faded out as the person begins to exhibit more independence.
- Monitor adaptations as necessary to ensure success.

Adapting Games, Sports, and Recreation for Children and Adults who are Deaf-Blind

Lauren J. Lieberman
SUNY Brockport

With the loss of sight and hearing, an individual's sensory input and experiences are reduced and overall development may be delayed. As a result, limits or predetermined expectations are sometimes placed on individuals who are deaf-blind by parents, professionals, agencies, and people who are deaf-blind themselves. This is equally true regarding recreational activities. Creative adaptations can alter recreation activi-

- **Refer to the activity by its common name.** If several adaptations have been made to the game of golf (e.g., using a different ball, a different club, and targeting holes closer together) it should still be referred to as golf. If we call activities different names because they differ from the original version, then individuals who are deaf-blind will not have the satisfaction of knowing that they can really play golf and may miss opportunities to converse about, and participate in, the activity with others who refer to it by its common name.
- **Modify activities in a way that enables students without disabilities to assume the impairment of the individual with a disability (Winnick, 1978).** For example, simulating a visual impairment or participating in activities in a wheelchair, will increase the sensitivity of individuals without disabilities: Teachers will better adapt activities for their students, peer tutors will better understand how they need to work with the student who is deaf-blind, and same age-peers will better understand why each activity is adapted.

Adapting Activities

The following issues need to be considered when making adaptations:

- **The Individual**
 - › Involve the individual in determining adaptations
 - › How does the person ambulate?
 - › Is the activity age appropriate?
 - › What are the individual's characteristics, preferences, and behaviors?
 - › What are the individual's favorite activities?
- **The Activity**
 - › Playing Area or Environment
 - › Make the area larger or smaller
 - › Make visible boundaries
 - › Lower the height of goals
 - › Orient the individual to the activity area
 - › Playing Object
 - › Make the object bigger or smaller

- › Make it softer or harder
- › Make it audible or bright
- › Change the texture of the object
- › Make the object heavier or lighter
- › Increase the size of the target

- **The Game**

- › Change the rules of the game
- › Change the objective of the game
- › Increase the tactile cues
- › Add guidance or a leader
- › Change the number of players
- › Increase chances
- › Decrease time of activity or add rest periods
- › Reduce repetitions or slow the pace

- **The Players**

- › Change the role of the players
- › Limit or add responsibility
- › Modify demands on the student
- › Decrease competition

- **Other Considerations**

- › What can you do to make the student more successful?
- › Will the individual achieve success with minor adaptations?
- › Will the child have success with no adaptations?
- › How can you add a cognitive component to the game?
- › How can you ensure peers or siblings will also enjoy the activity?

Examples

Eddie is a 15-year-old boy with Congenital Rubella. When asked what he wanted to do for recreation, he said he wanted to learn how to ride a unicycle. Despite our apprehension, we set up a program for him. The activity was age appropriate and matched his ability level. By using a guide wire and physical assistance for support, he learned how to ride, and within 3 months he was riding the unicycle independently.

Cory is a 17-year-old Deaf woman with a visual impairment, and cerebral palsy. She uses a wheelchair for ambulation, and has travel vision with corrective lenses. Cory lives in an environment which has long winters. Cory was introduced to

cross-country skiing by her high school physical education teacher. She sat in a sled, and used cut-off poles for propulsion. She was given occasional directional cues by her teacher or a friend in order to cross-country ski successfully. When she moved to a group home which offered cross-country skiing every week, Cory became involved because she knew she could ski with minor adaptations. She now skis regularly with her friends and family.

Margo is a teenager who is visually impaired and deaf. She wanted to play softball with her brother and their friends. They discovered that by placing large orange cones at each base, placing a bright red line of tape from one base to another, and allowing Margo to bat off a tee, she was successfully included in the game. These adaptations were developed over time as needed.

Glenn is a 16-year-old boy who is deaf, visually impaired, and mentally retarded. Glenn attends his local high school. His physical education teacher found a wonderful way to adapt volleyball and at the same time increase the excitement for the other children. The ball used was a beach ball which is brighter and slower than a volleyball. The kids were permitted to hit the ball up to three times, let the ball bounce twice, catch it if they needed, walk to pass the ball, and have no limit on how many people touched the ball. Points were scored if the other team hit the ball under the net, out, or if the ball bounced more than two times or rolled. All the kids loved it and the volleys were so long they were out of breath at the end of each point. Although many adaptations were made to the game, they still called it volleyball.

Janet is a 12-year-old girl who is deaf-blind, has hemiplegic cerebral palsy and is ambulatory. She wanted to get involved in her neighborhood hockey games which are always played in her cul-de-sac with her peers from school. Her older brother wanted her to be involved, so together they discovered what would work. They played with a frisbee which was brighter and slower than the ball they were previously using. The frisbee had to be touched by each player before they could score (which enabled all the children to be active participants). Janet had a buddy who physically assisted her and communicated to her where the frisbee was. When Janet was hitting the frisbee, the other team had to count to five before defending her. The game was a big hit and soon they even made a frisbee hockey club! Through partial participation, Janet was an active member of her team.

Dereck is an 11-year-old boy who is deaf-blind and has ADHD. The kids on the playground always

played kickball and he really wanted to play. A student-teacher found out what it took to include Dereck. The kids had a choice to kick from a pitch or to kick a stationary ball. Dereck kicked the stationary ball and a friend guided him around all the bases. The friend who was guiding Dereck let him know through sign when to kick the ball, when to run, and when he passed each base. Whenever anyone kicked the ball the kids in the outfield retrieved the ball, lined up front to back and passed it over and under until the entire team touched the ball. When it arrived at the last child, that child yelled "stop." The person who was running stopped and counted how many bases he touched. If he made it to third, then he made three points for his team, if she ran around two times all the way to home plate then eight points were earned. This continued until each person on the team had a chance to kick, then the teams switched. Dereck and his peers loved this game because there were no outs and it was an individual as well as team oriented game.

Chris is a 6-year-old boy who is deaf-blind. His kindergarten class often plays twister for a socialization and body awareness activity. Chris's teacher called DB-LINK (The National Information Clearinghouse On Children Who Are Deaf-Blind) and they gave her a great idea. She took a donated queen-sized sheet and traced rows of circles, squares, triangles, hearts, and stars. On top of the shapes she traced glue, and on top of the glue she sprinkled different colored glitter for different shapes. She made a spinner to match the tactile twister game and even brailled it so Chris could be the caller. The interpreter signed the commands to Chris, and voiced when he was the caller. The kids in the class loved it and were further challenged not only to know the colors but also the shapes during the game!

Jake is a 7-year-old boy with Congenital Rubella and cognitive disabilities. His inclusive first grade class was working on locomotion, directionality, and color identification. His physical education teacher decided to play the game Bell Balloon Bash (Lieberman & Cowart, in press). Jake chose his own colored balloon which had bells inside. He was shown different locomotor skills by a peer to get to the balloon which was a visible 10-12 feet away. When he arrived at the balloon he was shown how to kick it using verbal and physical assistance. He then, with continued verbal and physical assistance, chased the balloon using different locomotor skills. He was given feedback by the teacher immediately following appropriate performance (McInnes & Treffry, 1982). Jake con-

tinued this activity throughout the unit and slowly decreased his need for physical assistance.

Adaptations Work!

We need to let people know about adaptations that work. As we tell success stories, we raise others' expectations, and help them learn how to adapt recreational activities to people who are deaf-blind or have multiple disabilities.

For example: Eddie Martinez who is deaf-blind was a star in the Eastern Athletic Association for the Blind track and swim meets; Riley Ford is successfully included in elementary physical education in Idaho; Gabriel Labossier is deaf-blind and has been actively involved in cross country skiing, biking, and track activities; Harry Cordellos is a successful water skier and is blind; Tricia Zorn is blind and has won medals for swimming at the paralympic games in Seoul, Korea; Kelly Butterworth is deaf and was on the US downhill team for the World Games for the Deaf in Finland; and Dacia Hirsch is a World Class horseback rider.

It is also important to share the recreational successes of the individuals in your school, neighborhood, or home. Make a video, write an article for the school newspaper, send your story to *Deaf-Blind Perspectives*, or make an announcement on your local radio station. Successful participation in recreation, sport, and physical education is possible and that needs to be known!

References

- Block, M. (1992). What is appropriate physical education for students with profound disabilities? *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 9, 197-213
- Davis, W. E., & Burton, A.W. (1991). Ecological task analysis: Translating movement behavior theory into practice. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 8, 154-177.
- Lieberman, L.J. (1995). Recreation for individuals who are deaf-blind. *Deaf-Blind Perspectives*, Monmouth; OR: DB-LINK.
- Lieberman, L.J., & Cowart, J.F. (in press). *Games for People with Sensory Impairments: Strategies for Including Individuals of All Ages*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- McInnes, J.M., & Treffry J.A. (1982). *Deaf-Blind Infants and Children: A Developmental Guide*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Van Dijk, J. (1966). The first steps of the deaf-blind child towards language. *International Journal for the Education of the Blind*, 15(1), 112-115.
- Winnick, J.P. (1978). Techniques for integration. *Journal of Physical Education and Recreation*, 49, 22.

Recreational Resources For Your Library

- Block, M.E. (1994). *A teacher's guide to including students with disabilities in regular physical education*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Ideas for assessment, programming, and inclusion techniques of children in preschools, and elementary, and secondary schools.
- Dell, S., & McNerney, P. (1992). *Art and games: Sensational experiences for students with deaf-blindness*. East Providence, RI: Meeting Street Center.
- An innovative book that offers art, interaction, and movement activities.
- Kasser, S.L. (1995). *Inclusive games: Movement fun for everyone*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Many games and activities for inclusive settings. Geared toward individuals with any disability.
- Lieberman, L.J., & Cowart, J.F. (in press). *Games for people with sensory impairments: strategies for including individuals of all ages*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Games, sports, and activities that can be immediately played by any individual. Adaptations for individuals who are blind, deaf, deaf-blind, or multiply disabled. Includes how to play goal ball and beep baseball.
- Lieberman, L.J., & Downs, S.B. (1995). Physical education for students who are deaf-blind: A tutorial. *Brazilian International Journal of Adapted Physical Education and Recreation*, 2, 127-143.
- Teaching techniques, strategies for participation, instruction on how to set up peer tutoring, and motor and fitness assessment ideas.
- Lieberman, L.J. (1993). Project S.I.M.P.L.E.: Activities for individuals with sensory impairments and multihandicaps. In S. Grosse, & D. Thompson (Eds.) *Play and recreation for individuals with disabilities: Practical pointers*. Reston, (pp. 80-88). VA: AAHPERD.
- Includes pictures as well as providing teaching strategies for these activities.
- Smith, T.B. (1994). *Guidelines: Practical tips for working and socializing with deaf-blind people*. Burtonsville, MD: Sign Media Inc.
- Gives ideas on the types of recreational activities often preferred by individuals who are deaf-blind.