For children, participation plays an important role in the establishment of physical and mental well-being, skill development, provision of grounds for social bonding and interpersonal skill development, improvement of peer interactions and school performance, and yielding better developmental outcomes in adulthood (Cosbey, Dunn, & Johnston, 2010, Desha & Ziviani, 2007, Law & Latham, 2006). Participation has been associated with academic success, lower rates of school dropout and reduced arrests in young adulthood, and the ability to set and obtain personal goals (Carris, Farmer, & Mahony, 2008).

Lack of participation at younger ages can lead to reduced motivation later in life (McNeil, 2009). In comparison to children without disabilities, participation of children with disabilities is often of a lower quality or more frequent as well. Among children with physical disabilities, there is greater restriction in participation, more time spent in passive activities, less variation, and fewer social engagements (Lee et al., 2006).

Children with disabilities are more frequently isolated from participating in social activities, due to the nature of their disabilities or limited opportunities to engage with typically developing peers (Cosbey, Dunn, & Johnston, 2010; Elkin & Elkin, 1995; Panzer & Duncan, 2003).

**OBJECTIVES**

- **Primary Purpose:** To examine parent needs and strategies for promoting participation of their children in the contexts of home, school, and community, based on data collected from a new measure: The Participation and Environment Measure for Children and Youth (PEM-CY). The PEM-CY contains the well-validated version of the PEM-CY and a demographic questionnaire.
- **Secondary Purpose:** To compare open-ended responses about parent needs and strategies between parents of children with and without disabilities.

**METHODS**

- **Data Collection:** This study examined existing data that were collected for the larger study that developed and tested the PEM-CY (Cosbey et al., press). Data collection for the larger study occurred from May 2010 to October 2010. Recruitment occurred through collaboration with parent networks, community and school personnel. Parents completed the web-based version of the PEM-CY and a demographic questionnaire.

**SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Respondent Education</th>
<th>Country of Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian (2%)</td>
<td>English (9%)</td>
<td>USA (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (3%)</td>
<td>English (9%)</td>
<td>Canada (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (81%)</td>
<td>English (9%)</td>
<td>Australia (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other or not reported (10%)</td>
<td>Other (5%)</td>
<td>Australia (1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Type</th>
<th>Parental Needs &amp; Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Urban (46%); Suburban (34%); Small Town (6%)</td>
<td>Ride (4%) -- 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain (2%)</td>
<td>Ride (4%) -- 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural (4%)</td>
<td>Ride (4%) -- 1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

- Parents of children with disabilities identified over three times as many needs as parents with typically developing children (McNeil, 2009).
- Most needs occurred to the home environment. The most needs were in the categories of 1) support, equipment and structure modification, 2) funding, and 3) seeking activity and encouragement (Bedell, 2009). Parents of children with disabilities reported support and structure modification needs across all three settings: 1) support, equipment and structure modification, funding, and access to more programs.
- Parents of typically developing children identified access to more programs as their greatest need.

**STRATEGIES**

- **Parents** to support child participation are fundamentally similar between populations. The most commonly identified strategies were: present, speak, encourage, seek activity, support, and encouragement (Pivik, 2001). Parents of children with disabilities and parents of typically developing children listed the same strategies as their top needs.
- Although responses frequently presented similarly in nature, responses also often alluded to being disability-specific. "Physically assist her with the activity" (Parent involvement).
- "Involves the community in the work that our child and her disability" (Seeking activity).
- "Help him live as an equal member of the family" (Encouragement & Support).
- Strategies more common among parents of children with disabilities were: advocate, educate, child, educate others, and accessibility, equipment, and modification (Khetani et al., 2009).

**REFERENCES**