

Project Background & Aims

Arlington Recreation Department (Town of Arlington, MA) offers a variety of recreational programs:

Summer camp for K-5 children:



Summer camp for preschool children:



The Gap: Department director Joseph Connelly expressed need for counselor training explicitly focused on inclusion of children with disabilities and/or social-emotional challenges, as well as more behavior management instruction. Evidence suggests that staff impact recreational program inclusivity (1,4).

Background: Existing research indicates program staff who receive inclusion training feel more confident, more positively toward inclusion, & get better child responses (3,6). Lack of inclusion training is associated with more negative staff attitudes toward inclusion & lack of confidence (2,5).

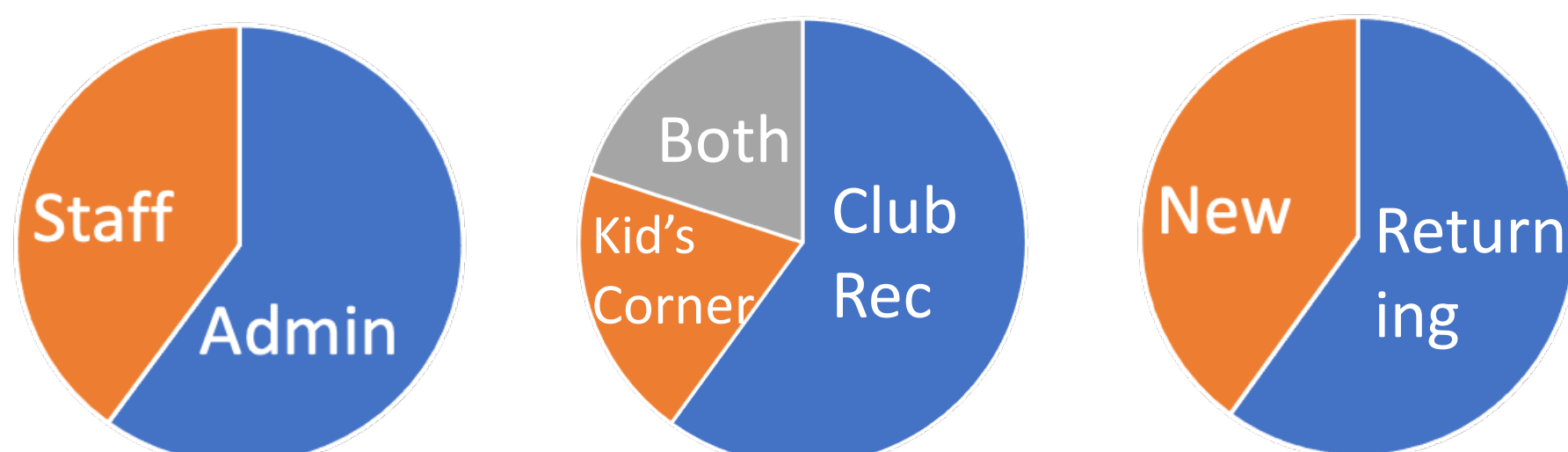
Project Aim #1: Gather and analyze data about what aspects of the staff training process currently support & hinder inclusivity of Arlington Recreation Department summer camp programs.

Project Aim #2: Generate feasible recommendations for inclusivity-focused training practices that can supplement existing staff training.

Participants

Inclusion Criteria: Age 18+, currently employed at the Arlington Recreation Department

Total Interview Participants: 10



Methods

Data Collection:

- **Semi-structured interviews** with program staff and administrators (n=10)
- **Observation** of program staff orientation (field notes taken)
- **Observation** of Club Rec & Kid's Corner (field notes taken)
- **Reading** relevant program documents including parent handbook & staff manual

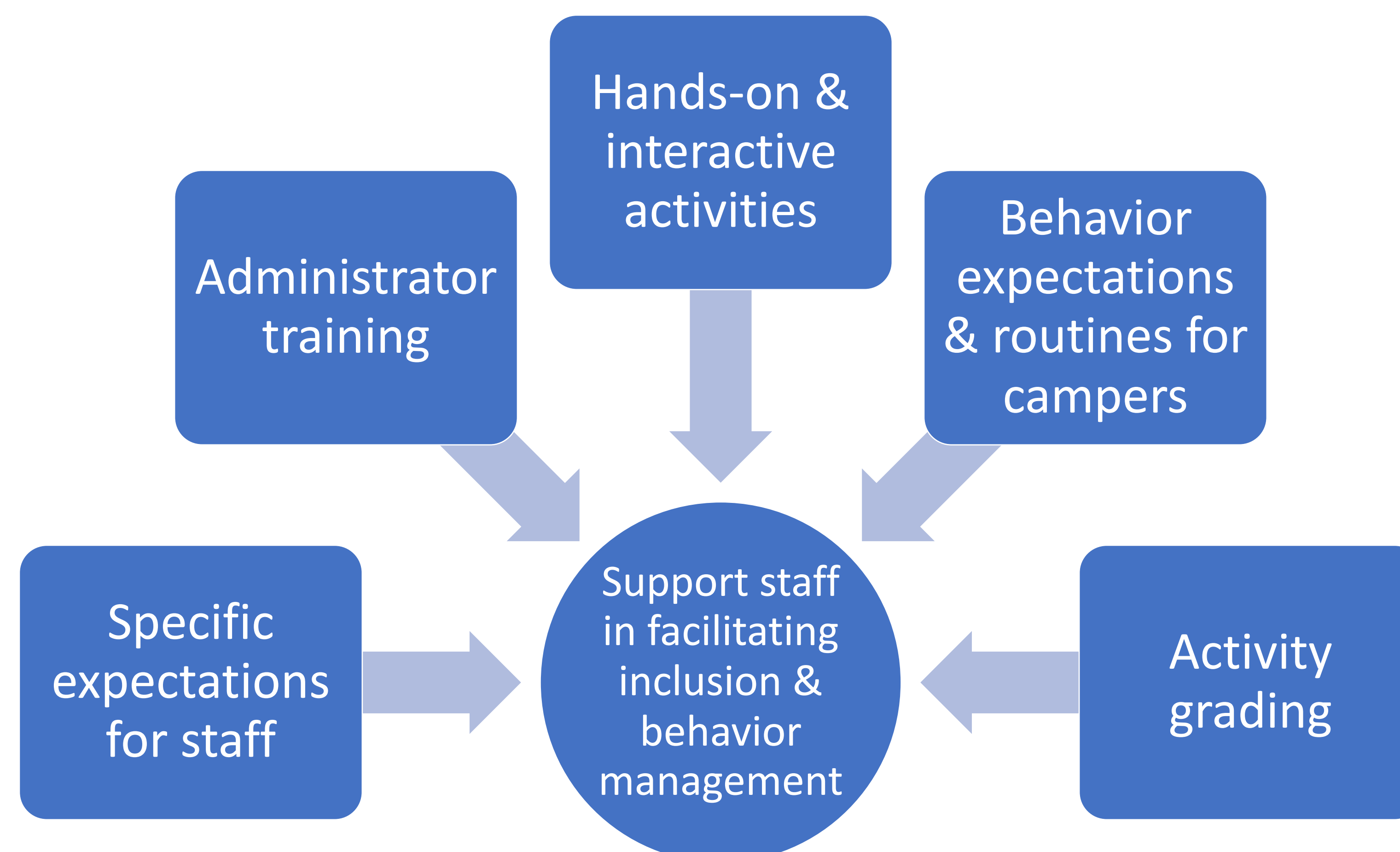
Data Analysis:

- Inductive & deductive **thematic analysis** of interview, observation, & document data
- Each category of data analyzed for recurring & relevant themes
- Patterns in themes across categories of data integrated within the recommendation report

Distribution & Evaluation:

- The recommendation report(s) were written based on research findings integrated with existing literature & resources.
- The report(s) were sent to interview participants still affiliated.
- Interview participants were asked to complete a survey on the perceived usefulness and appropriateness of the recommendations, & the professionalism of the researcher in collecting data.

Themes of Findings



Discussion

Strengths of this project include:

- Recommendations are tied directly to qualitative data analysis
- Data collection occurred over a period of several weeks, allowing for an in-depth look at program operation
- Perspectives of both program staff and administrators represented within recommendations
- OT lens utilized in creating recommendations for increasing camper social & activity participation

Limitations of this project include:

- Data collection & data analysis were conducted by a single researcher, therefore difficult to reduce bias
- Small participant sample size
- Camper perspectives not directly represented in the recommendations

Next Steps

The work of this project can be continued by:

- Using survey results to further refine recommendations
- Implementing the recommendations
- Collecting data about the impact of expanded training on staff/administrator attitudes & performance
- Continuing to conduct research on the impact of staff training on inclusive recreation programs

Acknowledgements

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References

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