

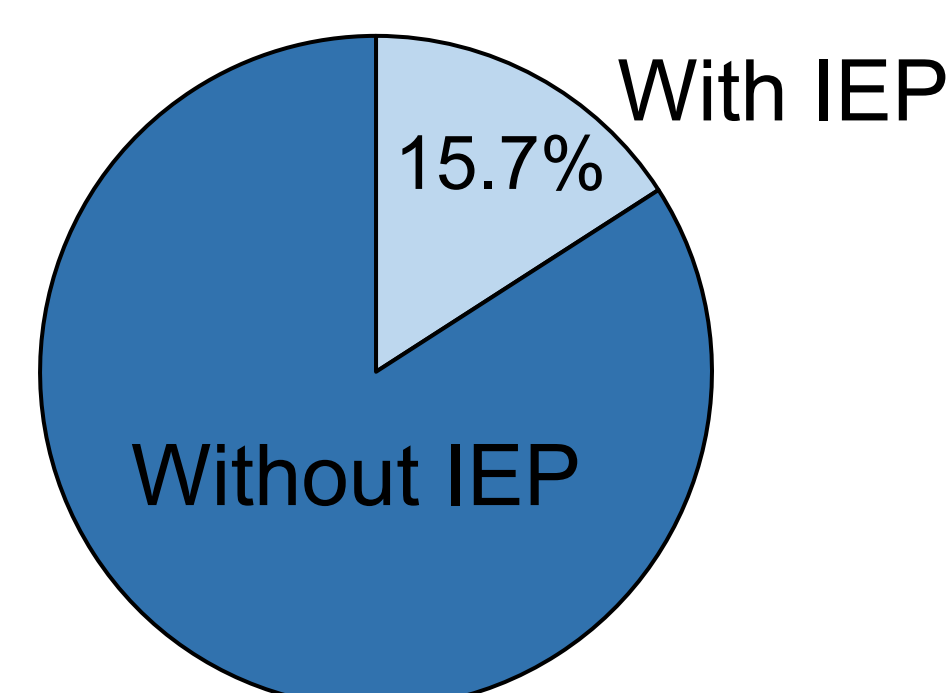
Program Evaluation of Inclusion Within Arlington Recreation Summer Programs for Young Children

Alison Swayne, OT/s & Ryan Whitney, OT, OTD, OTR, MA

Background

Children with disabilities often find barriers to participation in community settings (Bedell et al., 2013). While many professionals emphasize the importance of striving for inclusive camp environments, best practices for evaluation of inclusion within these settings are still in development (Brannan et al., 2000; Miller et al., 2018; Siperstein et al., 2019). Arlington Recreation Department runs day camp programs open to both town residents and non-residents: Club Rec (K to grade 5) and Kids Corner (2.9 to 5 years).

Arlington District Students ('20- '21)



(Massachusetts Department of Education, 2020)

This project focuses on “children with high needs”, which are defined as children with or without recognized disabilities who require additional support to fully engage in summer camp programs.

Department Need

Recreation director requested assistance with strengthening inclusion within Club Rec and Kids Corner. Through addressing this departmental need, the researcher also seeks to explore the role of occupational therapists to work within community-based settings to promote inclusion.

Aims

This project aims to:

- 1) Evaluate aspects of inclusion within the programs using ethnographic observation addressing questions based on a researcher-created structured observation form
- 2) Recommend ways to support future program development with a higher degree and quality of inclusion

Methods

Phase 1

Pre-Implementation Phase:
Development of Program Observation Form (POF) to define initial guiding research questions



Scan QR code to access POF

Phase 2

Ethnographic Observation Phase:
1) Initial review of written resources
2) Interviews with administrative staff and directors
3) Weekly review of camper demographic information
4) Daily program observation with fieldnotes

Phase 3

Data Analysis Phase:
1) Quantitative analysis of demographic data & observed camper needs
2) Deductive thematic analysis of fieldnotes, interviews, & written resources
3) Inductive analysis of qualitative data to edit POF

Phase 4

Recommendation Phase:
Creation of final recommendation reports, including analyzed demographic data, recommendations to address areas for further development, & relevant resources to support future action

Project outcomes assessed via satisfaction survey completed by program and department directors upon review of final report. For example, “given adequate funding, to what degree do the recommendations seem feasible for future implementation?”

Types of Results Produced

Approaches to Staffing

Systems of Communication

Physical Environment

Play & Social Participation

Policies & Marketing

Recommendations aim to meet the observed needs of campers during the 2021 summer as well as establish systems of support for future summers.

Research findings and final recommendations only available for department internal dissemination

Discussion

Strengths of Project:

- Methods developed through review of literature
- Multiple week implementation period allowed for observation, interviews, & informal conversations
- Application of OT lens
- Recommendations are targeted to site & informed by current best practices

Limitations of Project:

- Researcher bias may impact qualitative data analysis
- Observer effect due to presence of researcher
- Fast-paced & busy environment made it unlikely that all inclusion practices were observed
- Lack of reliable & valid established methods for program evaluation

Future Steps

Recreation Department:

- 1) Creation of action plan to implement recommendations
- 2) Development of new inclusion policy
- 3) Implementation of recommendations
- 4) Follow-up evaluation of inclusion practices following implementation period

Occupational Therapy:

- 1) Advocacy for OT skill in evaluation & implementation of inclusive practices in camp settings
- 2) Inclusion of OT voices in ongoing conversation about best practices in inclusion & accreditation
- 3) Development of OT-created tool for evaluation

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Contact

Alison Swayne, OT/s, alison.swayne@tufts.edu