

INTRODUCTION

Adaptive swimming lessons increase the accessibility of this sport and life-saving leisure activity for children of all abilities.

Benefits:

- Children with cerebral palsy (CP) **improved their gross motor function and swimming skills** through an adaptive swim program.¹
- Children with CP, paresis, and spina bifida **improved their balance and swimming movements** through an adaptive swim program.²
- Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) **improved their swimming and safety skills** with behavioral supports, equipment aids, modeling, and decreasing physical assistance through an adaptive swim program.³
- Online training** is an **effective instructional format**⁴ that increases accessibility, flexibility, affordability, interactivity, collaboration, and reach.⁵

Current Limitations:

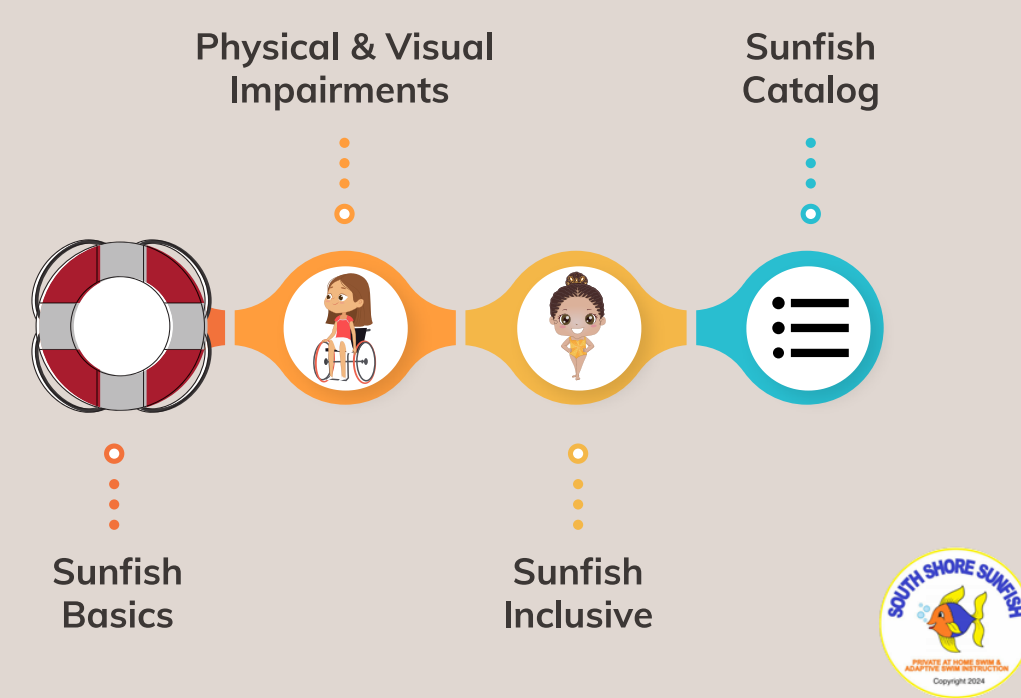
- Individuals with disabilities participate less frequently in recreational physical activity due to **barriers to awareness, accessibility, financial costs, transportation, and physical and cognitive impairments**.⁶
- Existing swimming guidelines focus on water safety skills⁷⁻¹⁰ yet **lack universal guidelines for adaptive swimming instruction**.

The Sunfish Method[®]

An adaptive swimming online training course for instructors to build knowledge and confidence in teaching adaptive swimming lessons.

Designed by pediatric occupational therapist and adaptive swimming instructor
Marykate Galluzzo, OT, OTD, OTR

Training Outline



- **Online**
- **Self-paced**
- **2 - 2.5 hours to complete**
- **Question & Answer Platform**
- **Downloadable and printable visuals and infographics**

PURPOSE & AIMS

Purpose: Enhance The Sunfish Method[®] in training swimming instructors to teach adaptive swimming lessons to children of all abilities.

Aim 1: Analyze feedback from instructors trained by The Sunfish Method[®].

Aim 2: Make recommendations on how to modify course content and structure.

Aim 3: Disseminate evidence supporting The Sunfish Method[®].

METHODS

- Develop feedback survey to assess perceptions of The Sunfish Method[®].
- Identify community-based swimming organizations and parent/caregiver support groups for children with disabilities.
- Disseminate The Sunfish Method[®] with the feedback survey to identified contacts.
- Analyze feedback and make recommendations to enhance the course.
- Identify locations for additional dissemination.

RESULTS

1400+

Dissemination emails sent

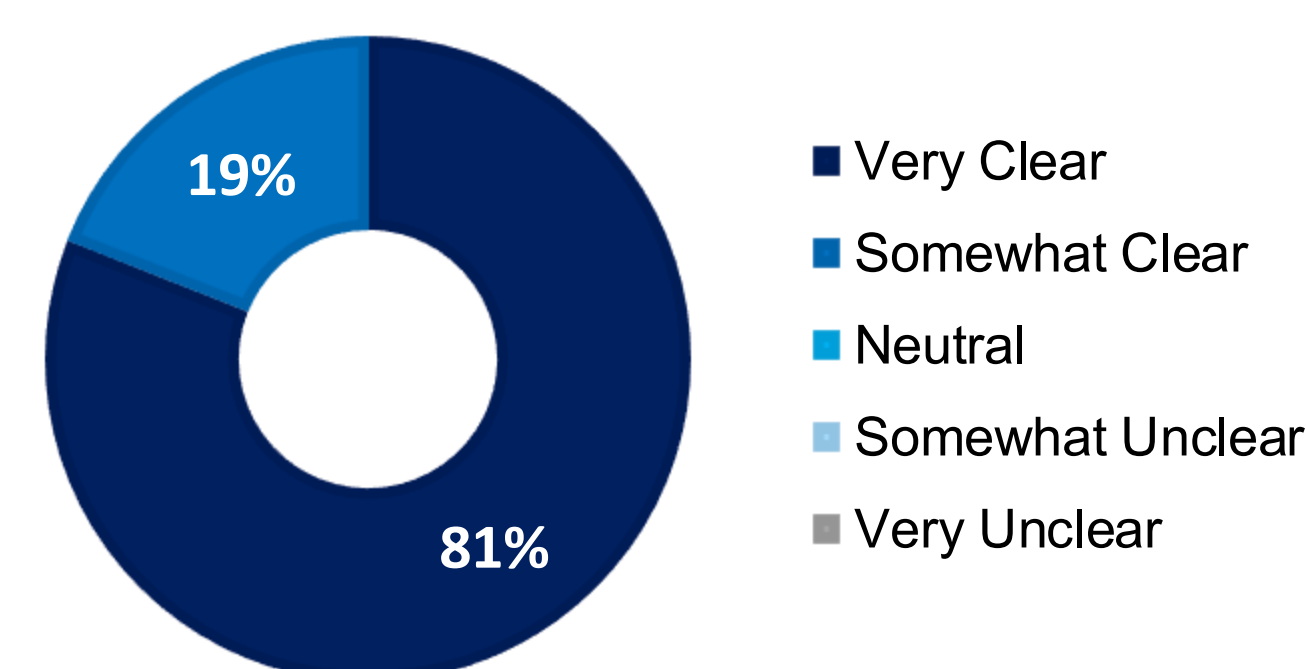
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Instructors completed The Sunfish Method[®]

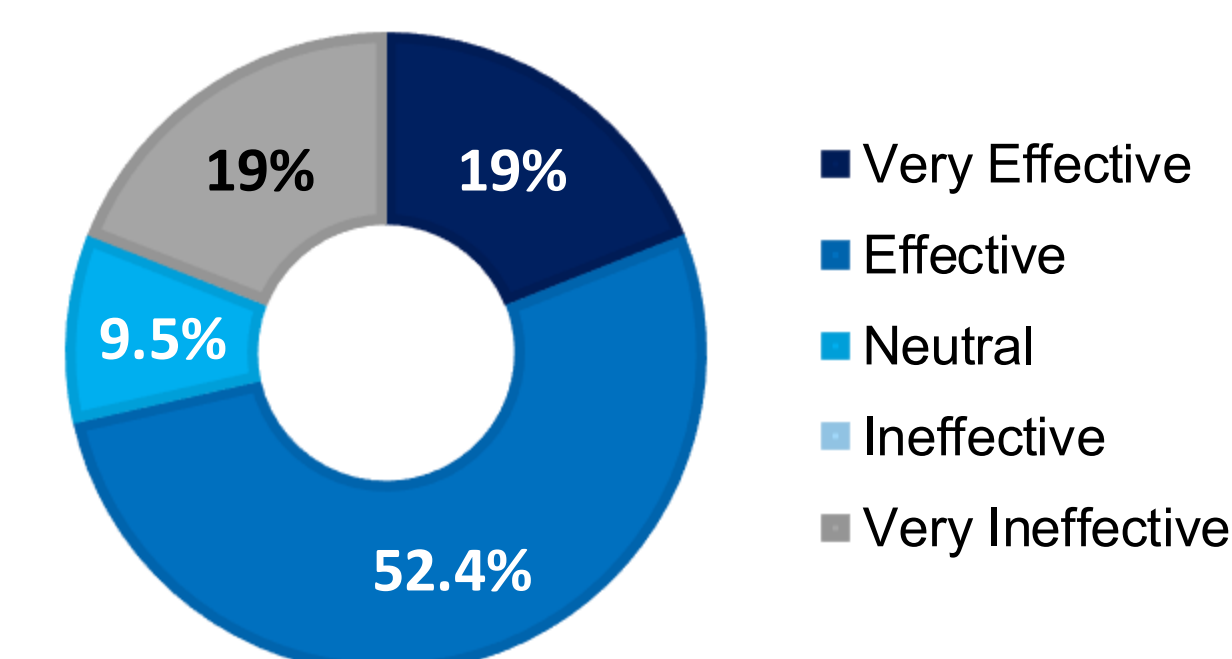
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Feedback survey responses collected

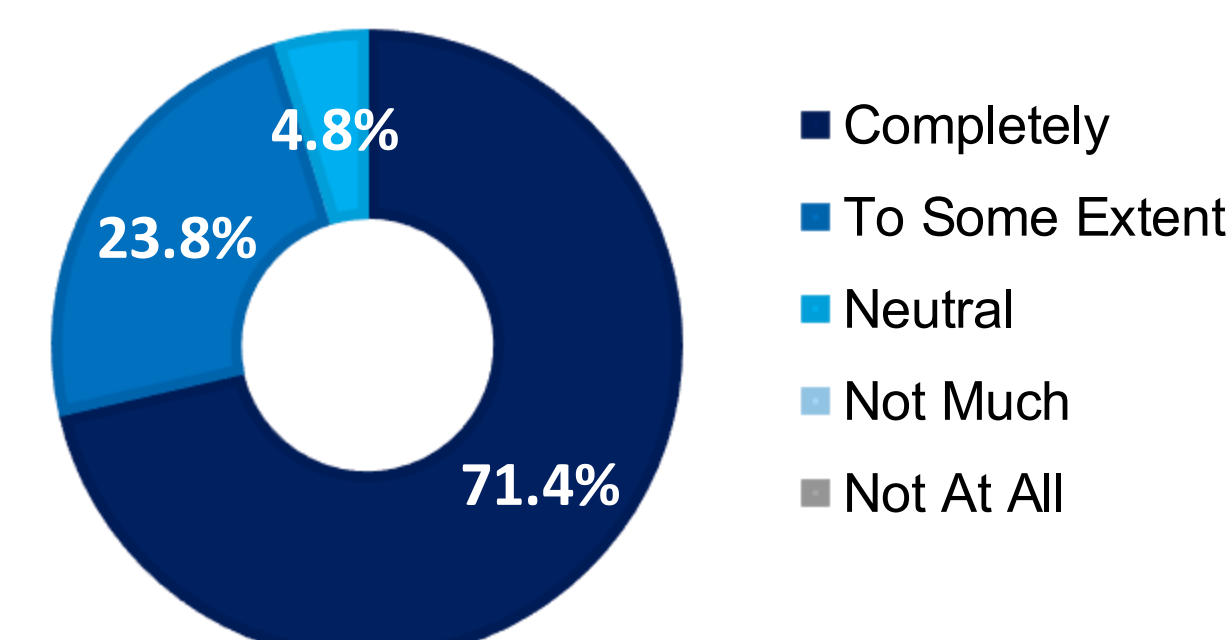
How clear and understandable was the course material?



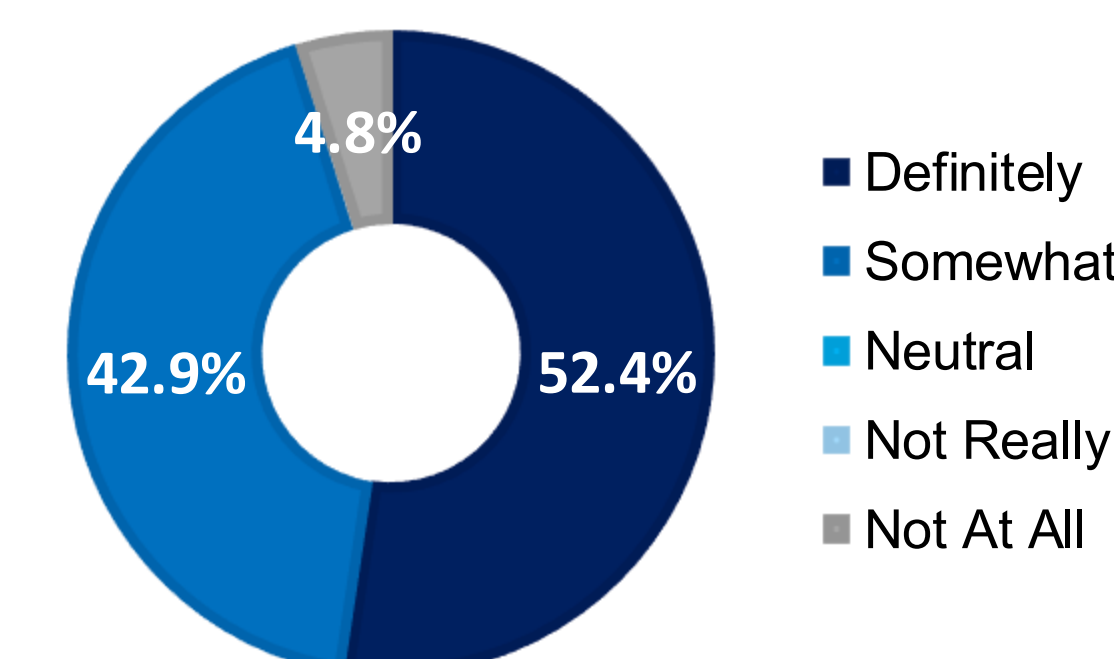
How would you rate the effectiveness of the instructor in delivering the course material?



Did the course provide you with enough information to teach basic adaptive swimming skills?



Did the course improve your confidence to teach adaptive swimming lessons to individuals with disabilities?



Swimming Instructor Positive Perceptions of The Sunfish Method[®]

"The visual aids are **wonderful!**"

"It was a really big help. **It's given me quite a lot of confidence.**"

"The Sunfish Method is a **good overview of 'tailored' teaching** for any young swimming student, with special emphasis on children who would benefit from adaptive learning."

"I learned **new things!**"

"An **excellent, spot-on way to convey the messages** of safety and checking in with parents."

"The PES (Person-Environment-Swimming) Model was pretty cool because it **simplifies it down in a way that...considers the straightforward factors involved** in teaching swimming lessons."

"All training was **thorough and extremely informative.**"

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance The Sunfish Method[®]:

Expand on...

- **Group lessons**
- **Common fears of swimmers** (e.g. fear of water, being cold, not being able to breathe while in water)
- **Parent/caregiver involvement**
- **Techniques to support individuals with specific physical, visual, and hearing impairments**

Include...

- **Videos of real-world lessons using learned techniques**

Study Strengths:

- **Increased accessibility** of adaptive swimming trainings
- Demonstrated the **value of occupational therapy** in adaptive swimming
- **Provides direction to enhance** The Sunfish Method[®] for its target population

Study Limitations:

- Small number of survey responses
- Randomized survey options may have introduced order bias
- Limited feedback opportunities on the application of The Sunfish Method[®] to real-world lessons

Future Considerations:

- Conduct additional focus groups with community-based aquatic organizations to gather feedback from adaptive swimming instructors
- Continue dissemination through community-based aquatic organizations, conferences, and parent/caregiver support groups for children with disabilities

CONCLUSION

The Sunfish Method[®] provides instructors with **skills to teach adaptive swimming lessons to children of all abilities, with opportunities to enhance its impact by incorporating additional adaptive techniques.**

REFERENCES & CONTACT INFORMATION

References:



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