

THE EXPERIENCES OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

REIMAGINING PEDAGOGY THROUGH
FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNTS

EDITED BY WESLEY J. WILSON AND JUSTIN A. HAEGELE



THE EXPERIENCES OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Bringing together a set of first-person accounts of physical education from the perspectives of disabled children and adults, this book puts disabled people's voices in the foreground.

The book provides a rich set of case study material that deepens our understanding of the experiences of disabled people and challenges students, researchers, and practitioners to reflect critically upon their own positionality. The first part of the book discusses the ways in which disability has been conceptualized, how the voices of disabled people have sometimes been marginalized, and how nondisability power has historically framed the narratives of disabled people in physical education literature. It also discusses the innovative methods used in this book—such as storytelling through recorded conversations and drawings in addition to more traditional chapter writing—to empower disabled children and adults to act as authors of their own stories. Then the book presents the stories themselves in a variety of written, narrative, and alternative formats, a series of authentic accounts of the lived experiences of disabled people in physical education. Finally, the book concludes with the editors' final thoughts and reflections about this collection of stories that can be used in the classroom to foster dialogue and encourage critical thinking. Importantly, these prompts have been co-constructed between the editors and the disabled people themselves.

This book is essential reading for any course in adapted physical education, physical education, or disability, for any pre- or in-service teacher, instructor, or coach working with disabled people, and for people who experience disability or their families with an interest in education, physical activity, or methods for elevating the voices of disabled people.

Wesley J. Wilson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Health and Kinesiology at the University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign, USA. Wilson’s research interests focus on the storytelling of the lived experiences of physical education professionals and the disabled youth who receive such services. He has served as the director of Project ISAACC and codirector of Project REACH-SLP, two adapted physical education and speech-language pathology training grants. Wilson is also a codirector of Project CAPER and trains adapted physical activity doctoral scholars through an interuniversity partnership.

Justin A. Haegele is the Colgate Darden Endowed Professor as well as the Director of the Center for Movement, Health, and Disability in the Department of Human Movement Studies and Special Education at Old Dominion University, USA. Contextualized within the interdisciplinary field of adapted physical activity, his primary research interests center on exploring how disabled individuals experience physical activity participation, including within school-based physical education contexts. Haegele is the Director of Project CAPER and a codirector of the MAMC, two adapted physical activity training collaboratives. He is also the immediate past president of the North American Federation of Adapted Physical Activity and the editor-in-chief for the peer-reviewed publication *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*.

THE EXPERIENCES OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Reimagining Pedagogy through
First-Person Accounts

Edited by Wesley J. Wilson and Justin A. Haegele



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Designed cover image: Getty Images/FG Trade

First published 2025

by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2025 selection and editorial matter, Wesley J. Wilson and Justin A. Haegele;
individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Wesley J. Wilson and Justin A. Haegele to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The Open Access version of this book, available at www.taylorfrancis.com, has been made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-No Derivatives (CC-BY-NC-ND) 4.0 license.

Any third-party material in this book is not included in the OA Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. Please direct any permissions enquiries to the original rightsholder.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-032-41656-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-41654-0 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-35910-4 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003359104

Typeset in Sabon

by Newgen Publishing UK

*Everything we do is dedicated to our partners and
children, Laura, Jane, Casey, and Emma.*



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>List of Contributors</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xvi</i>
1 Case-Based Learning and the Physical Education of Disabled Students <i>Wesley J. Wilson, Paul H. Warner, and Justin A. Haegele</i>	1
2 Our Methodology for Case-Based Learning and Strategies for Reader Engagement <i>Wesley J. Wilson, Paul H. Warner, and Justin A. Haegele</i>	6
3 “I Loved Sports and Physical Activity, but I Hated Physical Education”: Lindsay’s Story <i>Lindsay E. Ball</i>	14
4 Titanium Strides: Conquering Able-Bodied Physical Education with a Prosthetic Leg <i>Jenna Fesemyer</i>	20
5 The Search for a Medal <i>Paul Tandy</i>	26

6	The Difference between Mainstream (Inclusive) and Adaptive (Self-Contained) Physical Education Classes <i>Mikayla Shea Heston</i>	34
7	The Empty Promise of “You Can Do Anything” <i>Shaelyn West</i>	45
8	Account of My PE Experiences <i>Maddy Mau</i>	57
9	Too Loud and Sitting Out <i>Hollis Jennings</i>	63
10	“It’s Not Really an Activity ... That’s Just Having a Beach Ball” <i>Nora Booth</i>	68
11	A Physical Education Story about Best Friends <i>Hollis Jennings and Nora Booth</i>	76
12	The Physical Education Experience through the Eyes of a Teacher with a Disability <i>Chris Ahrens</i>	83
13	An Interview about PE with Carson Jones <i>Carson Jones</i>	89
14	Pushing Past Expectations <i>Angela West</i>	95
15	Autism in the Locker Room <i>Tanner Williams</i>	103
16	PE and Sports Are Awesome! <i>Matthew McGeary</i>	105
17	Fitness with Fun and Friends <i>Grace Gourley</i>	112
18	Sports as a Bridge to Success in Life <i>Thomas Greany</i>	117

19	“I Realize How Utterly Absurd My PE Experience Was” <i>Chelsey Baker</i>	128
20	Peer Tutors Are PE Friends <i>Savannah Love</i>	131
21	“Forced Inclusion”: Inclusion Looks Different for Everyone <i>Nora Cizik</i>	137
22	Our Reflections and Concluding Thoughts <i>Justin A. Haegele and Wesley J. Wilson</i>	145
	<i>Index</i>	151

FIGURES

4.1	Jenna (middle) at her high school senior field day with her triplet siblings: Jessica (left) and Jonathan (right)	22
6.1	Mikayla's first time competing in Special Olympics, 2005; Mia Admire on her left, her mother on her right	35
6.2	Mikayla's last day of 7th grade; the photo is of her and Bruce, both giving a thumbs up	36
6.3	Mikayla participating in 8th grade Special Olympics	37
6.4	Mikayla and Brandon Arn	38
6.5	Mikayla's father and Sierra Yates assisting her in a long jump	39
6.6	Mikayla holding a bronze medal	41
6.7	Screenshot of Mikayla and Julie Koyama Sensei from a video titled "Mikayla Heston is a Judo Inspiration"	42
6.8	Rod Conduragis Sensei, one of the instructors of Obukan Judo sitting with Mikayla on the pedestal	43
9.1	Drawing of Hollis not being able to hear her teammate (right) or teacher (blowing her whistle on the left) during physical education	64
11.1	Drawing of Hollis and Nora B. with their peers and teacher during a volleyball game in physical education	78
16.1	Matthew after his adapted sports league game at school	108
20.1	Drawing of Savannah playing Just Dance in physical education	132
21.1	Drawing of Nora C. sitting on the sidelines during middle school physical education class	138

CONTRIBUTORS

Chris Ahrens has been teaching Adapted PE in the San Diego Unified School District for fifteen years. He was born with cerebral palsy which impacts the motor skills on the left side of his body. For nine years Chris balanced being a full-time teacher with being an integral part of the US CP Soccer Team and participated in the 2012 Paralympic Games in London.

Chelsey Baker is a twenty-six-year-old female power wheelchair user with a physical disability of spinal muscular atrophy. She was born and raised in Henderson, Tennessee, before moving to Illinois to attend the University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign, USA. She earned a BS in special education in 2019 and accepted a teaching position in Urbana upon graduation. In 2023, she relocated to Chicago, where she now teaches special education in Chicago Public Schools. Chelsey continues to advocate for herself and her students in efforts to create a more inclusive and accepting society.

Lindsay E. Ball is an assistant professor of physical education at the State University of New York, Cortland, USA. Her ultimate hope is to research potential avenues whereby visually impaired individuals feel welcomed, challenged, and fulfilled in PE, physical activity, and sport spaces. Lindsay is a 2014 Paralympian in alpine skiing and long-distance running. She currently serves on the board of directors of the Maine Organization of Blind Athletic and Leadership Education and assists with the organization's planning and hosting of sport education camps for blind and visually impaired youth.

Nora Booth is eleven years old. She loves to read and swim. It doesn't matter what temperature it is, she loves to swim in cold or warm water. She also crochets and draws. She mostly draws people, but she's best at animals. She loves to sketch plants because they're beautiful and fun to draw. She's been in a wheelchair since she was six years old. She doesn't like writing about herself.

Nora Cizik is a sixteen-year-old girl in Salt Lake City, USA. She has a rare genetic disorder called KBG syndrome and five other genetic variants of unknown significance. Nora likes to be creative, doing sewing, arts and crafts, and theater classes. She enjoys skiing, horseback riding, and spending time with her friends and family.

Jenna Fesmeyer is a PhD candidate at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA, in the Department of Recreation, Sport, and Tourism. She is studying the relationship between adaptive sport programs and physical literacy for youth with physical disabilities. Jenna is also passionate about engaging in education and outreach initiatives to make sport accessible to all girls and women. Jenna is a two-time Paralympian in the sport of track and field, specializing in the 1500m, 5000m, and marathon distances.

Grace Gourley is sixteen years old and likes to hang out with her friends and the nurses who come to her home ♥ She likes to have fun! Her favorite subject is art, and she likes to play board games. She's nice, a little silly, and a little serious. She's friendly and social, sometimes quiet, and wants to just stay at home. She cares a lot about other people, and she doesn't really like it when people focus on her. She waited a long time for a new heart. She received a new heart and liver on January 24–25, 2024, and she was in the hospital for seven and a half months. She has dedicated her chapter to Ms. Elle, who was inspirational to her while she was going through her surgeries and has helped her through the hard times in PE.

Thomas Greany is a freshman at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, USA, majoring in exercise/sports science with a sports management concentration. He was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder when he was five years old. He is honored to have this opportunity to share his experiences in PE with current and future teachers.

Mikayla Shea Heston has completed her BS in kinesiology and is currently pursuing an MS in clinical exercise physiology. Her primary disability is cerebral palsy, and she has a few undiagnosed disabilities. Her interests include biomechanics, disability advocacy, and scientific discourse. Mikayla hopes to

pursue a PhD in rehabilitation science so she can open a multidisciplinary clinic to help people with disabilities become more confident and independent.

Hollis Jennings is eleven years old. She is hard of hearing and attends a performing arts middle school. Her major is theater, and her passion is musical theater. She loves to sing, and she wants to perform on Broadway. She doesn't like PE, but she likes to ride her bike or scooter, swim, and dance. She lives with her two moms, her older sister, a dog named Ginger, three cats named Fig, Willow, and Bluey, and three chickens named Star, Milktoast, and Florence. She hopes this book helps others to learn how kids like her can feel in PE class. She wants to thank the staff at U-FIT at the University of Utah, USA, for creating a special program that makes PE more fun!

Carson Jones is seventeen years old and lives in Onalaska, USA, with his parents Chris and Chris, his older sister Makenzie, and his younger sister Morgan. His family has a couple of furry family members; Tucker, a yellow Labrador retriever; and his sister's Goldendoodle, Yellie. Carson was diagnosed with autism when he was three and a half years old at Gunderson Health Systems. Carson has always liked cars, and his parents recall this was one of the things that made them wonder about him being on the spectrum. Carson has been able to tell a car's make and model by its logo since he was two years old. His love of cars can only be matched by his love of animals, mainly dogs. He also enjoys video games, his favorite being *Gran Turismo*, riding snowmobiles, boating, swimming, talking with friends, and UTV riding.

Savannah Love is fearless in living her best life and embracing her true self! She loves to be hands-on, being creative in the kitchen or on an art project with her mom and two sisters. She enjoys kayaking and camping with her family. One of her superpowers is her confidence! If you play a Taylor Swift song, she will sing and dance her heart out! Savannah has set a goal for herself to run a 5K. She is not going to let blindness stop her from doing hard things. Her family isn't your normal family. Her brother Xander also has Bardet-Biedl syndrome, and one of her two little sisters has type 1 diabetes. Her family loves to be active, focuses on nutrition, and finds ways to creatively adapt to their families' needs. Savannah has two dogs, Koda and Luna, who help her stay active by going for walks and sometimes even kayaking with them! Savannah often goes with her family to a friend's cabin, where her mom makes her go with them on daily hikes.

Maddy Mau is a rising senior in a public high school. She has no usable vision save for light perception, and she uses a cane. She's been enrolled in PE classes alongside her sighted peers since kindergarten.

Matthew McGeary enjoys and loves sports. He's good at sports stats and players and trades for professional sports teams, trading from this team to a new team. His dream is to be a sports broadcaster.

Paul Tandy was raised in Anchorage, USA. He was originally born in Taiwan, but because of his blindness and the fear that his biological parents couldn't take proper care of him, he was put up for adoption. Paul is the third youngest child of nine siblings. His parents adopted seven children and have two biological children of their own. His parents instilled a great work ethic in him, and after high school he moved to California to attend a center that was designed to help blind and visually impaired adults live independently. He currently lives in California, where he works as a switchboard operator. In his free time, Paul enjoys listening to NASCAR races on the radio. He also enjoys all kinds of music, and his current favorite kind of music is Bluegrass, with Alison Krauss and Alison Brown being his favorite artists. Paul enjoys playing many musical instruments. While his longtime friends have known him as a pianist and guitar player, he has been working on the mandolin recently. He even has a YouTube channel under his name, if readers would like to visit it.

Paul H. Warner is a former adapted PE (APE) teacher pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign, USA. Paul taught APE for seven years in various preschool through post-high settings, and he recognized the importance of incorporating student input into the curriculum to provide meaningful instruction. He was excited by the opportunity to be a part of this project. In his free time, Paul enjoys spending time with his family, participating in various outdoor activities, and cheering on his favorite sports teams.

Angela West was born and raised in Chesapeake, USA. She has cerebral palsy and uses a power wheelchair for mobility. She earned a bachelor's degree in therapeutic recreation and a master's in rehabilitation counseling. For five years she worked for a nonprofit organization that served youth with disabilities. Later, Angela interned in the US Senate within the Disability Policy Office. Currently, she works at the Partnership for People with Disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University as the disability engagement specialist, connecting people with disabilities to various projects.

Shaelyn West is a twenty-seven-year-old queer artist, activist, and type 1 diabetic residing in Philadelphia, USA. A woman of many passions, Shaelyn loves to talk anyone's ear off about music, dolphins, tattoos, art, human rights, and/or Beyoncé. A longtime retail employee of Vans, she plans on returning to Temple University to finish her advertising degree so she can

eventually join Vans' advertising and marketing team. In her free time, she is on the dance floor, driving around in her beloved Jeep Wrangler, or curled up on the couch watching ocean documentaries with her two feline sons, Tugboat and Miss Thomas.

Tanner Williams is a twenty-year-old college student at Tidewater Community College, USA, who plans to transfer to a university in the next two years. When he was nine years old, he was diagnosed with Asperger's, which later became recognized as autism spectrum disorder. He has been doing research with Dr. Justin A. Haegele at Old Dominion University and in conjunction with Dr. Samantha Ross at West Virginia University (now at the University of Utah), with the research mainly focused on areas devoted to social interactions within educational settings as it relates to autistic children.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to thank the following individuals for their contributions and support for this project. First, we must thank and acknowledge the folks at Sorenson Legacy Foundation for their financial support of this project, without which we would not have been able to offer this product as open access and would not have been able to appropriately compensate our authors. Second, we would like to send our thanks and appreciation to Safia Keller, Development Director in the College of Education at the University of Utah, who worked tirelessly to find funding for our various projects, including this one. We must also acknowledge and thank the work of our project coordinator, Paul Warner, who, in addition to coauthoring several chapters, has been instrumental in organizing the back end of this book. Finally, and most importantly, we must acknowledge and thank the contributing authors of this book. Without their enthusiasm to contribute to this project, and vulnerability in sharing their stories, this book would not be possible. Thank you to each of you for all you have done to help this project come to life.

1

CASE-BASED LEARNING AND THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION OF DISABLED STUDENTS

Wesley J. Wilson, Paul H. Warner, and Justin A. Haegele

Teacher educators describe case-based learning as a constructivist pedagogy in which preservice teachers “read hypothetical accounts of real-world situations and consider how they would respond if facing similar challenges” (Hemphill et al., 2015, p. 432). While such accounts are richly detailed and contextualized (Levin, 1995), proponents of case-based learning recognize the importance of addressing the readers’ systems of beliefs and values in acquiring new knowledge through their engagement with each case (Stake, 2000). While each is unique, readers gain an understanding of the case, which may yield insight into similar scenarios they may encounter (Thomas et al., 2023). Further, readers can critically reflect and discuss the cases, often through questions or prompts at the end of each case, enhancing their ability to apply their learning to their specific contexts (Goeke, 2008).

In physical education teacher education spaces, case-based learning has long been associated with the preparation of preservice physical educators (Collier & O’Sullivan, 1997; Richards et al., 2015). A plethora of cases have inundated our practitioner journals in physical education (e.g., *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance*; see Hemphill et al., 2015) in the effort to stimulate critical thinking about and problem-solving for the complex issues many physical educators will encounter in contemporary school settings (Hodge et al., 2020). To this end, research has suggested that case-based learning may increase the ability to identify and address problems that may arise in physical education (Bolt, 1998) while being more relevant for preservice physical educators than traditional lecture-based approaches (Collier & O’Sullivan, 1997; Timken & van der Mars, 2009). Supporting this, Hemphill and colleagues (2015) found that case-based learning prompted

preservice physical educators to consider multiple sources of knowledge, to engage and reflect upon cases, and to focus on future teaching situations.

More on theme with this edited book, the past twenty-five years have also seen the proliferation of cases centered more specifically on the experiences of teachers and disabled students¹ in physical education spaces. Perhaps the most noteworthy application of case-based learning to this area is Hodge and colleagues' edited book *Case Studies in Adapted Physical Education* (2003, 2020). In the most recent and second edition, the editors collected a series of cases covering a wide range of topics "designed to help teacher candidates and novice and experienced teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, fluency, and strategies necessary to design and implement effective adapted and general [physical education] programs in elementary and secondary schools" (p. 2). In the construction of their edited book, Hodge et al. (2020) relied on chapter authors who represented "culturally diverse perspectives as experienced teachers and teacher educators who have worked together to provide authentic cases that portray life in the schools from the perspective of former and current adapted and general [physical education] teachers" (p. 3).

There is obvious merit in this approach to designing and presenting authentic cases for preservice teachers to read and discuss. In fact, my coeditor Justin and I (Wesley) contributed chapters to their book (Haegele et al., 2020; Wilson & Haegele, 2020). But as useful as such cases are from the lens of adapted/physical educators, it is much more challenging to make meaning of the experiences of disabled students, particularly since much of knowledge creation comes from people without embodied experiences of disability (Haegele & Maher, 2023a). Indeed, scholarship in the area has largely elevated the perspectives of nondisabled stakeholders (e.g., teachers, administrators) while deprioritizing the intersubjective feelings of the disabled students themselves (Haegele & Maher, 2023b). In these spaces, we risk emboldening nondisability power in framing the construction of knowledge in adapted/physical education spaces (Goodwin & Howe, 2016) and reduce to an afterthought the embodied knowledge—actions, feelings, and lived experiences (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005)—of disabled people. Thus, it is incumbent upon us to help create a relational space through scholarship, in which disabled people can *(re)claim control of the narrative* (Kuppers, 2003) of their participation in physical education. With this in mind, we sought to confront and attempted to resist the urge to decide what is meaningful or relevant about disabled students' experiences in physical education spaces. With this belief, Justin and I conceptualized the book you hold now.

Our Application of Case-Based Learning

In acknowledgment that a case-based learning book about the experiences of disabled students in physical education spaces must position those with

embodied knowledge of disability as the authoritative voice (Wilson et al., 2021), we reached out to members of various disability communities to gauge interest in contributing a chapter to this edited text. While the specifics of this effort are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, we asked authors, both children and adults, to tell their stories about their participation in physical education. Through their contemporaneous and retrospective accounts, we hope that you, as the reader, will be reflexive and embrace both ideas that support and those that potentially disrupt your held beliefs and presuppositions, as we attempted to during their development.

As we practiced reflexion, we were poignantly aware of how adapted physical education/activity texts, even well intentioned as they may be, can easily become entrenched in enlightened ableism (Peers et al., 2023). Lyons (2013) described *enlightened ableism* as when explicitly nonableist beliefs are juxtaposed to the condoning of ableism in practice. Simply put, does our desire to elevate the embodied knowledge of disabled authors, as we detailed in this opening chapter, align with the rest of the book? As editors of this book, Justin and I frequently discussed ableism and do so in much more detail in Chapter 22.

After over two years in development, we present what we believe is a first-of-its-kind, case-based learning book: *The Experiences of Disabled People in Physical Education: Reimagining Pedagogy through First-Person Accounts*. Before presenting the authors' stories, in Chapter 2, we first detail the methods used to develop this resource and discuss our reflexivity in this collective effort. Starting in Chapter 3, we present the authors' accounts of their physical education experiences. Finally, in Chapter 22, we conclude with a brief discussion for your consideration. Again, it is our hope that this collection of stories ("cases") will provide opportunities for critical introspection, reflexion, and discussion among professionals in physical education, adapted physical education, and special education.

Note

- 1 We adopt a social relational model of disability in which we abandon conceptualization of disability as an individualistic, biological trait. Rather, we acknowledge the "social structures, attitudes, and relations that disable classes of people" (Peers et al., 2014, p. 273). Accordingly, we use terminology that reflects this position such as "disabled student," which situates an ableist society as the disabler.

References

- Bergum, V., & Dossetor, J. B. (2005). *Relational ethics: The full meaning of respect*. University Publishing Group.
- Bolt, B. R. (1998). Encouraging cognitive growth through case discussions. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 18(1), 90–102.

- Collier, C. S., & O'Sullivan, M. (1997). Case method in physical education higher education: A pedagogy of change? *Quest*, 49(2), 198–213.
- Goeke, J. L. (2008). A preliminary investigation of prospective teachers' reasoning about case studies with expert commentary. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 31(1), 21–35.
- Goodwin, D. L., & Howe, P. D. (2016). Framing cross-cultural ethical practice in adapt[ive] physical activity. *Quest*, 68(1), 43–54.
- Haegele, J. A., & Maher, A. J. (2023a). A creative non-fiction account of autistic youth integrated physical education experiences. *Disability & Society*, 38(9), 1647–1666.
- Haegele, J. A., & Maher, A. J. (2023b). Toward a conceptual understanding of inclusion as intersubjective experiences. *Educational Researcher*, 52(6), 385–393.
- Haegele, J. A., Wilson, W. J., & Holland, S. K. (2020). Are integrated physical education classes inclusive? In S. R. Hodge, N. M. Murata, M. E. Block, & L. J. Lieberman (Eds.), *Case studies in adapted physical education: Empowering critical thinking* (2nd ed., pp. 52–57). Routledge.
- Hemphill, M. A., Richards, K. A., Gaudreault, K. L., & Templin, T. J. (2015). Pre-service teacher perspectives of case-based learning in physical education teacher education. *European Physical Education Review*, 21(4), 432–450.
- Hodge, S. R., Murata, N. M., Block, M. E., & Lieberman, L. J. (2003). *Case studies in adapted physical education: Empowering critical thinking* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Hodge, S. R., Murata, N. M., Block, M. E., & Lieberman, L. J. (2020). *Case studies in adapted physical education: Empowering critical thinking* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Kuppers, P. (2003). *Disability and contemporary performance: Bodies on edge*. Routledge.
- Levin, B. B. (1995). Using the case method in teacher education: The role of discussion and experience in teachers' thinking about cases. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11(1), 63–79.
- Lyons, L. (2013). Transformed understanding or enlightened ableism? The gap between policy and practice for children with disabilities in Aotearoa, New Zealand. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 45(2), 237–249.
- Peers, D., Eales, L., & Goodwin, D. (2023). Disablism, ableism, and enlightened ableism in contemporary adapted physical activity textbooks: Practising what we preach? In D. Goodwin & M. Connolly (Eds.), *Reflexivity and change in adaptive physical activity: Overcoming hubris* (pp. 34–46). Routledge.
- Peers, D., Spencer-Cavaliere, N., & Eales, L. (2014). Say what you mean: Rethinking disability language in *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 31(3), 265–282.
- Richards, K. A., Hemphill, M. A., & Wilson, W. J. (2015). Student-authored case studies as a reflective component of student teaching. *Physical Educator*, 72(1), 117–138.
- Stake, R. E. (2000). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 435–454). Sage.
- Thomas, J. R., Martin, P. E., Etnier, J. L., & Silverman, S. J. (2023). *Research methods in physical activity* (8th ed.). Human Kinetics.
- Timken, G., & van der Mars, H. (2009). The effect of case methods on preservice physical education teachers' value orientations. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 14(2), 169–187.

- Wilson, W. J., & Haegele, J. A. (2020). Teachers navigating placement decisions. In S. R. Hodge, N. M. Murata, M. E. Block, & L. J. Lieberman (Eds.), *Case studies in adapted physical education: Empowering critical thinking* (2nd ed., pp. 12–16). Routledge.
- Wilson, W. J., Theriot, E. A., Richards, K. A., Trad, A., & Schriener, L. (2021). Experiential learning and inclusion through service-learning: Recommendations for kinesiology to support students and people with impairments. *Quest*, 73(3), 245–263.

2

OUR METHODOLOGY FOR CASE-BASED LEARNING AND STRATEGIES FOR READER ENGAGEMENT

Wesley J. Wilson, Paul H. Warner, and Justin A. Haegele

As “editors,” we did not embark on this journey lightly. A case-based learning approach like ours forced us to consider the ethics and logistics of this undertaking. While we were resolute with the “why?” of this book (see Chapter 1), it was significantly more thought-provoking to determine the “how?” Consequently, in the early stages of conceptualization, we developed our own unique approach to case-based learning. This resulted in some notable deviations from traditional case-based learning applications. First, scholars have typically positioned the cases—or scenarios—as hypothetical accounts of authentic situations (Hemphill et al., 2015). Instead, our adaptation of case-based learning presents *first-hand* accounts of physical education experiences directly from disabled authors. They are quite literally positioned as the authors of their own experiences and meaning-making. The authors’ contributions may be better described as *nonfiction narratives* (Wilson et al., 2024), utilized previously in qualitative research (e.g., Haegele & Maher, 2023) to elevate the voices of disabled participants. By default, our approach to this edited text resulted in such nonhypothetical, nonfiction storytelling. We believe that in doing this, we better leveraged the authenticity that is fundamental to case-based learning (Hodge et al., 2020).

Second, readers will notice that we opted not to include guiding questions or discussion prompts at the end of each chapter, unlike most case-based learning resources. While such features are standard and enhance opportunities for readers to reflect (Goeke, 2008), we intentionally omitted corresponding questions/prompts because we were concerned that by creating and presenting them alongside the authors’ words, we would unwittingly be presupposing what we, as “editors,” believed to be most salient about any

author's experiences. Rather, at the end of this chapter, we posit some generic questions and prompts that you may consider while reading subsequent chapters.

Third, our last major deviation from the traditional case-based learning approach, related to how we viewed and enacted our editorial responsibilities. Readers may have noticed our use of the word “editors” within quotation marks above. This is our recognition that we do not serve as editors of this book in the typical sense. Generally, editors will provide specific guidance (e.g., content, formatting, length, etc.) for authors' chapters and may have significant sway over what the final product looks like. We felt that serving in such a capacity was antithetical to the very argument we presented in Chapter 1. In the next section, we discuss the specifics of our methodology as transparently as possible, including how we “edited” the authors' chapters. We then describe the scholarly space we attempted to create for the contributing authors, recognizing the critical link between academia and disability communities (Callus, 2019). Finally, we reveal our own reflexivity and awareness of the power we may unwittingly exercise over others through this project (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) before turning to general tips for engaging with this case-based learning resource.

Content, Format, and “Editing”

As we considered the content, format, and our roles in “editing” during project conceptualization, the notion emerged to simply ask disabled people how they wanted to express themselves and share their embodied experiences related to their participation in physical education spaces. This aligns with our goal to empower the authors to (re)claim the narrative and meaning-making of these experiences (Kuppers, 2003), without presupposition on our behalf. Accordingly, we defaulted to yielding creative authority to our authors to facilitate a relational and scholarly space where their embodied knowledge belonged, was valued, and was accepted (Wilson et al., 2021). For example, some authors elected to expand their stories to include a discussion of their participation in sport and other physical activity settings. While a slight departure from our original scope of content (i.e., physical education), we did not seek to curb such conversation as we believed it would be unethical for us to dictate the types of experiences the authors choose to include in building their physical education stories. It is, perhaps, unsurprising then that this approach resulted in a range of content, formatting, and styles, as we deferred to each author in the reimagining of their embodied experiences—about their bodies, their beliefs, their senses of self—within physical education specifically, and across the cultural, political, and physical structures of a disablism society more generally (Gleeson, 1999). We detail these various ways of meaning-making next.

Traditional Chapters

Many authors, mostly adults, opted to format their nonfiction cases in a traditional convention. Readers will likely be familiar with this style of storytelling, as these chapters read more like autobiographical essays (Richards et al., 2022), in which the authors describe their lived experiences in physical education spaces. We should note that these chapters, like all chapters in this book, varied in length and in writing and presentation style, depending on the interests and background of the author. With a wide range of embodied experiences with disability, it makes sense for these authors to tell their stories differently and/or focus on different topics. That is, for some, like Mikayla Shea Heston (Chapter 6), sharing photos of experiences throughout their physical education and physical activity journeys helped to depict their thoughts and feelings, whereas others opted only to share their experiences through stories and conversations. Another author, Tanner Williams (Chapter 15), elected to share his story through the use of an open letter to physical educators. Within the letter, he shared his feelings and experiences, as well as his reflections as an adult looking back on those experiences. Grace Gourley (Chapter 17), on the other hand, wrote a short chapter of her physical education experiences consisting mostly of bullet points. To expand her storytelling, she participated in a follow-up conversation using her bullet points as a guide. This conversation was recorded and then transcribed verbatim so that it could be formed into her final chapter, as we describe in more detail next.

Transcribed Conversations: Sole Author Chapters

Many other authors, particularly younger ones, found it more comfortable to contribute through recorded conversations with us. The recordings were transcribed verbatim and formed into these authors' chapters, with great care given to not screen or alter the language used. More conversational than research-oriented unstructured interviewing, we asked authors to "talk to us about physical education," and to "tell us a story." These initial prompts were intentionally vague because we were sensitive to being the primary drivers of the discussion, which risked us perpetuating nondisability power as the framing focus (Goodwin & Howe, 2016). In addition, several of these authors chose to include drawings of their physical education experiences to provide more context for their chapters. Some drew during our unstructured conversations, giving us an opportunity to discuss their drawings (e.g., "what's the story behind your drawing?"), which often spurred additional storytelling. Thus, readers may notice references to these drawings in some chapters.

In full disclosure, we admit that, for some authors, more intentional support was needed, resulting in several adaptation strategies. In these

situations, we relied on more targeted questions and prompts, which aligned more with long-held traditional qualitative research practices and included statements such as, “tell me about (a normal/the best) day in physical education” and “tell me about what you (like/dislike) about physical education” (adapted from Pellerin et al., 2022). Commentary that this departs from our original intentions to elevate but not control the authors’ narratives is a fair criticism. I (Wesley) have openly discussed the ethical and moral dilemmas of attempting to empower disabled storytellers, particularly those with “limited” communication skills, which has left me “quite aware of my able-bodiedness” (Wilson et al., 2024, p. 322) in scholarly spaces. The alternative, however, to not even try to elevate these stories in this book, was a less appealing option.

Nonetheless, much like we did in Pellerin and colleagues (2022), we deferred to the authors if they needed extra support. The most notable examples were the authors of Chapters 9, 10, 16, and 20 (Hollis Jennings, Nora Booth, Matthew McGeary, and Savannah Love, respectively) who preferred to converse with us with a parent present. In these instances, their mothers acted as facilitators, providing prompts to recall and discuss various physical education experiences. During these conversations, however, we focused on engaging the four authors themselves, rather than their parents, as the former were positioned as the experts.

Transcribed Conversations: Coauthored Chapters

Two authors and good friends, Hollis Jennings and Nora Booth (Chapters 9 and 10, respectively) elected to coauthor Chapter 11 together. Participating in the same physical education class, we viewed this shared chapter as a unique opportunity for them to expand upon their common experiences and to draw a picture to further illustrate their participation. This chapter was based on an unstructured conversation, which was transcribed verbatim and followed similar protocols as the sole author chapters.

How We “Edited”

Consistent with our desire to elevate their voices, we exercised great caution in how we interacted and provided feedback to the authors. The format the authors selected impacted how we executed our editorial responsibilities. For the more traditional chapters, our feedback emphasized clarity and prompts to extend the authors’ thinking about their experiences in physical education spaces. Admittedly, this minimal involvement was the extent to which most chapters needed. Regarding the conversation-based chapters, we began with the full, unedited transcripts and attempted to shape the authors’ responses

into a workable flow of logic. This was an imperfect process, especially given the eclectic nature of these discussions. Because of this, at times, we had to lightly reorganize the text to enhance the readability of the authors' stories. Unless it was necessary to keep, we removed our responses during the conversation so that the words published would only represent those directly from the authors. However, if we felt it was impossible to convey the authors' meaning-making without the context of one of our responses, we published our side of the conversation too, making it clear to the reader which words belonged to us. Beyond this, we did not change the authors' words or edit their grammar as we felt strongly that that was part of their storytelling. The only exemption to this policy was if the conversation turned to a topic completely unrelated to the areas of physical education, physical activity, sport, or disability. In these circumstances, we removed those parts of the conversation from the chapter.

Finally, regardless of the type of chapter, we sent them back to the authors to ensure that the words and feelings represented therein accurately portrayed the authors' intent. We should note, though, as we were working through this process with the younger authors (and their parents), a revelation struck us. This project occurred over a two-plus year period and that is a considerable amount of time during a child's formative years. As such, for the younger authors who opted to tell their stories through recorded conversations, particularly if those chats occurred in the early stages of the project, we felt compelled to revisit those chapters with their corresponding authors prior to submission to the publisher to ensure that their perspectives were still accurately portrayed. This approach resulted in addendums being added by a few of the authors, often as footnotes, which provided a unique chapter feature illustrating the evolution of their meaning-making of their physical education experiences.

Our Reflexivity

Given the nature of this project and our call to embrace ideas that both confirm or disrupt one's belief systems regarding the intersection of disability and physical education, we must be transparent with our own reflexivity:

I (Wesley) identify as a White, cisgender, working class, nondisabled researcher and teacher educator in the field of adapted physical education. As an academic, I explore sociopolitical and relational spaces as they relate to disability and physical education. Through my work, I have problematized both direct and indirect instances of marginalization of disabled students, often at the hands of physical educators, and have actively sought avenues to elevate their stories. In my approach to understanding disabled students' lived experiences (and to editing this book), I reject the mantle of "expert" as only those with embodied experiences can carry such authority.

I (Justin) identify as a White, cisgender, nondisabled researcher in the area of disability and physical education. My research and scholarship, while situated within the field of adapted physical activity broadly, is driven by aims to further conceptually understand, define, and problematize issues that impact disabled people that may exist within, but also extend beyond, sport and physical activity spaces. In doing so, I seek ways to shift the knowledge-holder role to disabled people as expert knowers and away from nondisabled stakeholders, which aligns well with our overarching objectives within this book.

I (Paul¹) identify as a White, English-speaking, cisgender, nondisabled male who formerly taught adapted physical education. As a teacher, I often thought that all my students had positive experiences in physical education. However, it wasn't until I stopped to ask some students, that it occurred to me their experiences may be different than what I assumed. Prompted by these interactions, a couple of critical incidents, and some unanswered questions, I chose to pursue a doctorate to explore and enhance disabled students' experiences in physical education, recognizing such students as the authoritative sources of knowledge regarding their participation. When I was invited to help with this project, I was excited to delve deeper into the authors' lived experiences in physical education spaces.

Despite the overwhelming privilege our intersecting identities afford (Crenshaw, 1991), we seek to help coproduce the stories of disabled individuals in a way that elevates their voices without altering the meaning-making of their experiences in physical education (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). In so doing, we position ourselves as nondisabled academics and allies in recognition of how important it is to “combine academia with activism, to see them as two roles that, rather than being juxtaposed, are complementary with each other” (Callus, 2019, p. 1258).

Tips for Engaging with the Authors' Cases

As we mentioned, the subsequent chapters may look and sound quite different, which is by design. Accordingly, we have adopted and modified the case-based learning guidelines from Hodge and colleagues (2020) to assist you as you engage with each case:

1. Because of the uniqueness of each author's chapter, we recommend that you read a case several times before engaging in discussion with others. This will allow you some familiarity with the authors, particularly if they do not write or sound like you.
2. Before working with others, try to identify positive and/or negative experiences, if available, of a case. Determine what seemed to lead to these experiences.

3. After individual reflection, discuss the case with your classmates or colleagues. Determine and discuss if the others arrived at similar conclusions.
4. Try to provide thoughtful responses during discussions while considering your own presuppositions and personal biases.
5. Do not worry about the ordering of the chapters. To avoid imposing our own meaning-making of the experiences of the authors, we chose to randomize the chapter order without regard to disability category, author age, or thematic structure. Instead, we presented the authors' chapters, unadulterated, as standalone features of the book. The one exception was grouping Nora Booth's and Hollis Jennings' individual and coauthored chapters together for the purpose of continuity.

Questions for Individual and Group Reflection

Although we elected to not provide case-specific discussion questions/prompts at the end of each chapter, below we have drafted some generic discussion points that may be useful for enhancing reflection:

- What do I think about this story and why do I think this way?
- How do I feel when reading this story and why do I feel this way?
- How does this story resonate with my personal experiences in physical education?
- What do I think the author wants me to know about their experiences and how may it inform my (future) practice as an educator?
- Are there any themes that seem to reoccur across multiple chapters?

At the conclusion of this book, in Chapter 22, we will circle back to these questions as we wrap up our conversation. We hope that the following chapters provide you with multiple opportunities to critically reflect upon the embodied knowledge of the authors.

Note

- 1 Paul Warner was the project coordinator for this book. His responsibilities included identifying potential authors and providing them with information about the project; communicating with authors about their chapter status; participating in the recorded conversations; acting as a liaison between the authors and editors; and organizing the author database.

References

- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, J. D. L. 1992. *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Polity Press.
- Callus, A. (2019). Being an inclusive researcher: Seeking questions, raising answers. *Disability & Society*, 34(7–8), 1241–1263.

- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.
- Gleeson, B. (1999). *Geographies of disability*. Routledge.
- Goeke, J. L. (2008). A preliminary investigation of prospective teachers' reasoning about case studies with expert commentary. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 31(1), 21–35.
- Goodwin, D. L., & Howe, P. D. (2016). Framing cross-cultural ethical practice in adapt[ive] physical activity. *Quest*, 68(1), 43–54.
- Haegele, J. A., & Maher, A. J. (2023). A creative non-fiction account of autistic youth integrated physical education experiences. *Disability & Society*, 38(9), 1647–1666.
- Hemphill, M. A., Richards, K. A., Gaudreault, K. L., & Templin, T. J. (2015). Pre-service teacher perspectives of case-based learning in physical education teacher education. *European Physical Education Review*, 21(4), 432–450.
- Hodge, S. R., Murata, N. M., Block, M. E., & Lieberman, L. J. (2020). *Case studies in adapted physical education: Empowering critical thinking* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Kuppers, P. (2003). *Disability and contemporary performance: Bodies on edge*. Routledge.
- Pellerin, S., Wilson, W. J., & Haegele, J. A. (2022). The experiences of students with disabilities in self-contained physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 27(1), 14–26.
- Richards, K. A. R., Gaudreault, K. L., & Wilson, W. J. (2022). Research and practical implications of integrating autobiographical essays into physical education teacher education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 41(1), 159–164.
- Sparkes, A. C., & Smith, B. (2014). *Qualitative research in sport, exercise, and health*. Routledge.
- Wilson, W. J., Maher, A., & Kirk, T. N. (2024). Using qualitative methods working with disabled people. In K. A. Richards, M. A. Hemphill, & P. M. Wright (Eds.), *Qualitative research and evaluation in physical education and sport pedagogy* (p. 317–330). Jones & Bartlett Learning.
- Wilson, W. J., Theriot, E. A., Richards, K. A., Trad, A., & Schrinier, L. (2021). Experiential learning and inclusion through service-learning: Recommendations for kinesiology to support students and people with impairments. *Quest*, 73(3), 245–263.

3

“I LOVED SPORTS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, BUT I HATED PHYSICAL EDUCATION”

Lindsay's Story

Lindsay E. Ball

Introduction

First, I'd like to introduce myself to provide some context to who I am before I detail my relationship with physical education. I grew up in rural Maine where I spent much of my childhood outdoors. I tried every and all activity from playing tee ball with my entire extended family to driving a four-wheeler around my grandparents' farm. It wasn't until my parents took me to flag football sign ups when I realized that I probably couldn't see well enough to play. I have a hereditary degenerative eye condition, yet to be determined, that affects my retinas. My vision steadily declined throughout elementary school and by the time I was in high school I had only light perception with no useable vision. Though flag football didn't stick, I found other activities to do instead. I took dance lessons starting at age four through my senior year of high school. Downhill skiing was my favorite from the first freezing cold day. Skiing allowed me to travel the country and world as a member of the US Paralympic Alpine team. I loved sports and physical activity, but I hated physical education. Here's my story.

Elementary Experience

Physical education took place one day per week for the entirety of my elementary school years. I had the same two teachers during those years from kindergarten through sixth grade. The two middle-aged male teachers taught every lesson together so I couldn't tell you who my primary teacher was. All I knew was that both teachers knew my grandfather. Did I mention I'm from a small town? Mr. Clark was a member at the country club my grandfather

managed, and he would often talk about golf or ask how my grandparents were doing. Mr. Miller was a well-known former football coach for the school district. Personally, I don't think either one was in it for the love of teaching. They were not very engaged with students, and we would often play the same games year after year. Often, they sat in their office chairs on the sidelines to watch us play. It was during this time when I developed a dislike for physical education class.

I remember floor hockey, basketball, and volleyball most. I'm not sure if this is because while playing, or not playing, those games were where I was the most uncomfortable or because we played them most frequently. When my peers engaged in playing a game of floor hockey, I was resigned to passing a ball with a classmate in the teachers' office off the gym. This exclusion pointed out my being different from my peers when all I wanted was to fit in. It was in my early elementary school years where I figured out I was different, and I hated being reminded of that in physical education. Sometimes, I picked who played pass with me and sometimes the teacher asked for a volunteer. Regardless, I felt bad for pulling one of my peers from the game because playing pass in a 25-foot-wide crowded office was boring for both of us. One day, I remember only playing pass for about five minutes and my classmate asking if we could go back to the gym so they could play the game instead of playing pass with me. Of course, I agreed, and my classmate entered the game, and I sat in the bleachers alone. While my peers were clearly enjoying their time in physical education, I was not. I couldn't imagine why I needed to be there when all I wanted to do was leave and do literally anything else. On one occasion, I asked Mr. Miller if I could play floor hockey to avoid sitting alone. His response was "no," because he was afraid that I could get hurt. His solution to include me in the game was for me to keep score, but I couldn't see the action well enough to keep score, so, I resorted to just flipping numbers on the score board when prompted. This wasn't any better than sitting alone because now I was not only sad about being excluded, but I was also mad because I didn't care about whether or not I would get hurt. Anyone can get hurt in physical education.

I was permitted on the court during volleyball and basketball activities; however, I'm not convinced that was better than playing pass. During volleyball the only time I touched the ball was when my position rotated to the server box and I'm 99% sure I never made it over the net. I was always concerned that the ball would hit me in the face or my head because I never knew where it was flying around. Occasionally, one of the two teachers would stand on the court with me and attempt to help me strike the ball when it moved past which resulted in them just catching the ball and handing it to me to bump pass to someone near me. I didn't like this way of playing because I felt like it drew so much attention to me. In order for me to "participate" the game had to completely stop which led to everyone watching me stumble through

striking a volleyball. I wanted so much to be good at basketball. At the time it seemed like a favorite sport in my family. My two cousins closest in age to me played and we would practice at their house because they had a hoop off their driveway. I wanted to be like them, and play like them, however, my practice never paid off. Whenever we would play basketball during class and by some miracle, I made a basket everyone would clap for me, and it made me uncomfortable because to me, their cheers were unwarranted. When I did make the basket, it was because I had been given more opportunities to shoot than the others, and I felt like they were only cheering for me because I was blind. Often my classmates chose knockout as a “fun” game to fill time and as you can imagine, I dreaded it. I would rarely make a basket and I’m sure I got knocked in the head by the ball on multiple occasions. One particular round of knockout stands out for me. I was in the front of the line, not sure how I moved up there because I hadn’t made a basket. The ball kept being handed to me to keep trying and finally, the boy directly behind me took the ball and made the shot. Our peers clapped as if it were me who made the shot. I walked to the back of the line confused as to why people were clapping, and more importantly, why did Joe feel the need to make the basket for me? I never really wanted to play basketball after that. I felt embarrassed and out of place. I even stopped wanting to play with my cousins after that.

When I was in fifth grade, I attended a sports education camp for blind and visually impaired youth. It didn’t take long for me to love sports camp. I learned how to throw a ball, play goalball, beep baseball, and I learned about track and field. I was excited to return to school to try to incorporate some adaptations I had learned at sports camp to my physical education classes. Unfortunately, nothing really changed. I then looked forward to middle school when I planned to join my school’s track and field team.

Junior High School Experience

Physical education was a required class for both seventh and eighth graders at my junior high school. In seventh grade, none of my friends were in my combined physical education and health class, however, this was my best year of physical education because I didn’t feel like I stood out as much as I had in elementary school. I spent many years crediting my belonging in the class to the fact that the teacher was the mother of one of my peers and my visual impairment wasn’t a surprise to her; however, thinking about it now, I think she was just a good teacher. There was another disabled student in my class that I remember most in the classroom during our health lessons. Occasionally, our para-educators would come to the classroom to assist with the lesson and normally, I would dread this because I felt like having my para-educator in the classroom highlighted my being different and needing more help than my peers. However, I was more comfortable with her being

in health class because for once, I wasn't the only one who needed additional support.

Seventh grade was also the first year I had to change for class and the locker room made me anxious. No one explained locker room etiquette (does that even exist?) to me. There were only two or three bathroom stalls and a few showers, so often I resorted to changing in the corner near my locker. I found myself being so self-conscious and afraid to ask for help because I didn't know anyone well enough to ask. There were people and bags everywhere and I was afraid to trip and/or run into someone by accident. I tried to either be the first or the last person to enter between classes to limit the possibility of awkward interactions. I dreaded the locker room so much solely based on my assumption that there would be ten times more girls in there after school getting ready for sports that when I had to change for track practice, I found another bathroom in the school. I couldn't bear the thought of facing more people and more noise. I did this all through my high school years too.

My favorite part of physical education that year was having the opportunity to teach my class how to play goalball. I was excited to finally share something I had learned at sports education camp during physical education. My parents had given me a goalball for Christmas, and I was excited to use it. Though I probably would not have admitted it at the time, deep down, I wanted to play goalball with my peers to show them that I could be and was actually good at sports, and if they struggled a little playing goalball, even better. Other activities I enjoyed included climbing the Rockwall and learning fitness equipment in the weight room because neither activity involved a ball flying around. I felt as though my abilities were more evenly matched with my classmates during these activities.

Physical education the next year was completely different. Due to course scheduling, there were only six of us enrolled in the class and I'm not sure if the teacher taught a single lesson. On days when the weather was nice, we would go for a walk as a group. When we stayed inside, we just chose an activity at the start of class. Similar to the previous year, none of my friends were one of the other five students in my class, but I was able to become familiar with my peers because the class was so small, and we had already had art and home economics together the previous two academic quarters. Luckily for me, since our teacher wasn't the most engaged, we rarely had to change for class leaving me to happily avoid the locker room. That year the school ordered new audible bell balls for me to use during physical education. We were playing soccer one day when my classmate kicked the ball so hard, he popped it. Interestingly, I wasn't particularly happy when the teacher brought out the new bell soccer ball, but I was mad that I no longer had the option to use it. once it was popped. The last and final time I was hit in the face with a basketball happened during eighth grade physical education. My classmates had convinced me to try to shoot baskets with them despite

my protests and sure enough, I shot, the ball, it bounced off the backboard straight to my nose. My eyes instantly watered and I hoped my nose wasn't broken. I adamantly never touched a basketball on school property after that. Needless to say, I counted down the days until the quarter ended and I got to take woodshop instead. I was ready to take my chances with saws and hammers over feeling useless and incapable during physical education.

High School Experience

By the time I reached high school, I was determined to meet the minimum requirements of physical education needed to graduate. I enrolled in physical education the first quarter of my freshman year and didn't think about my physical education requirement again until about one month before graduation when I sought out the athletic director to sign off on the waiver form. I was able to wave my second required physical education credit if I participated in a varsity sport at some point throughout high school. My running cross-country fulfilled the obligation.

My physical education teacher was one of the assistant football coaches and he was more concerned with making friends with players than he was with teaching. Of course, I had physical education during football season. The only organized unit I remember from class was archery. I enjoyed physical education only because we got to be outside regularly. Some days I still dreaded going to class and tried to think of excuses to get out of going though I was rarely successful. Like in junior high, none of my friends were in the same physical education class with me so I had to rely on my peers that I knew but wasn't overly comfortable with to participate. Though being forced to rely on peers whom I didn't know well provoked some anxiety, I'm glad Mrs. Davis (the para-educator/braillist) did not accompany me to class. As a fourteen-year-old adolescent, all I wanted to do was blend in with my peers. I thought that if Mrs. Davis was in classes with me I would stand out and my peers would shy away from me or even worse think I couldn't do things independently of an adult.

Post Physical Education Reflection

Most days I still can't believe I entered the physical education profession. If you had told my eighteen-year-old self that one day I would be teaching physical education teacher education college students, I would have thought you had me confused with someone else who actually cared about physical education. Though I thought I didn't care about physical education, I still cared about sports and physical activity. After college, I joined the board of directors for the organization that ran the sports education camps I attended as a kid. I was and still am an advocate that blind and visually impaired

children and adolescents should have the opportunity to participate in and enjoy physical activity and sports like I did and do. Feeling unfulfilled in my job, I began researching a possible career change which led me to adapted physical education. I quit my job, packed my bags, and enrolled in a physical education preparation program with the goal of teaching adapted physical education. There were days during my activity courses when I had flashbacks of my K–12 physical education experiences. Activities weren't adapted to my individual needs and abilities, adapted equipment was absent or inadequate, and some days I didn't have to participate in class activities at all.

During the first semester of my master's degree, I read an article that said lots of disabled youth disliked physical education just as I had. Until this point, I hadn't explicitly considered that other disabled people had negative physical education experiences, and my goals shifted. I needed to know more, learn more, and do more, so, I enrolled in a PHD program.

My educational training, research, and experiences have taught me a lot about physical education and have allowed me to form my own view on what physical education ought to be for disabled students. I believe physical education should be a place for students to explore realistic physical activity opportunities in order for them to gain the skills necessary for long-term participation. I also believe students should have more autonomy and control over their physical education experiences though I'm not exactly sure how or what this looks like in practice. To this point, research has clearly established that disabled students often have negative physical education experiences, and it is my belief that we need to turn to disabled students to figure out how to improve their experiences in an effort to make tangible change.

4

TITANIUM STRIDES

Conquering Able-Bodied Physical Education with a Prosthetic Leg

Jenna Fesemyer

There is no doubt that my physical education experiences have shaped my perceptions of physical activity and sport. I'm thankful for the physical educators in my journey who have helped me see my experiences as opportunities to learn, be a problem-solver, and to adapt. Here is just a glimpse of my journey through physical education class:

Incorporating a student with a titanium prosthetic leg into physical education class was certainly not a part of the learned curriculum of my physical education teachers. My limb deficiency comes from a congenital birth defect called Proximal Femoral Focal Deficiency. This seemingly complicated term means that I was born with a shortened left leg and no hip joint. This congenital birth defect resulted in a minor surgery when I was an infant that would shape my residual limb to be more uniform, allowing for the use of a full-length prosthetic leg. At first glance, I could appear like an able-bodied student in physical education class: All I needed to do was wear long baggy pants. Often, I did. Other times, my prosthetic leg liked to make its presence known. The mechanism in my titanium knee would often chew at the fabric that surrounded it with every bend, leaving holes in my long pants for my peers to notice. I also remembered that with any moderate physical activity, my pant leg would get caught up at the top of where my prosthetic met my skin on my backside, making it look like I had a wedgie. As a young girl, I was very mindful of how I looked in physical education class and mindful of who was watching. In these two circumstances, it was easy for me to realize that my circumstances were different than my peers. I hid these differences by asking my prosthetic engineer to create a nude-colored prosthetic foam that went over the entirety of my prosthetic leg. This cosmetic choice lasted throughout the entirety of my primary and secondary education.

You can picture me now: a full-length prosthetic left leg, strong arms, a curious smile, and a love of movement. This was how I entered elementary school. While I missed a lot of school to get my prosthetic leg fixed to keep up with my high activity levels, a bright side of my titanium companion was that the inner components were made of colored metal, which other kids on gym class would promptly notice and admire. Those moments offered me a small reprieve from the heightened feelings I was experiencing otherwise in that environment.

Elementary School

It didn't take long for physical education class to become a high-alert part of the day. What do kids like to do in gym class? Well, they mostly like to run and skip. Unfortunately for me, both of those movements are activities that I struggled with the most. Anxiety would creep up as I questioned what the agenda would be in gym class that day. "Will we run laps around the gym to warm up? For how long? Can I trail far enough behind where my peers won't notice me?" In those moments, my eyes would glue to our big clock on the wall and beg the numbers to count down to "zero" just a little bit faster. I dreaded showing my peers my version of running. My prosthetic knee was "slow" to keep up with the rest of my body, which created an uneven gait that most of the time resulted in more of a gallop. A "double hop" with my right leg gave enough time for my left mechanical knee to "swing through," ensuring I wouldn't fall while completing the movement. Sometimes when I would run too fast, my prosthetic leg wouldn't swing in enough time to keep up with my pace. This would cause me to stumble and fall to the floor.

I also struggled with any "backwards" movement. My mechanical knee would "trigger" to bend when I would add weight to the front of my prosthetic. Any steps backward would make my prosthetic instantly buckle, resulting in a fall. There were many frustrating moments reaching to catch a ball or turning in a different direction that would land me promptly on the floor. These moments never got easier or less embarrassing. In those moments, I remember sitting on the floor and remembering that I had a choice: Do I cry and stay frustrated, or do I get up and keep going?

Luckily for me, my two siblings (I'm a triplet!) and I were in the same physical education class. I remember many moments of relief when my siblings picked me to join their team challenges and partner activities. Every so often, a peer would call me "peg leg" in gym class. These moments didn't sting as bad with my siblings in proximity. I felt great peace having them close by. We almost always operated as a unit. We played the same games in our "free time" in physical education class and often looked over to each other during activities as our nonverbal "check" that our day was moving along as it should. I cherished these moments, but it often makes me wonder: What



FIGURE 4.1 Jenna (middle) at her high school senior field day with her triplet siblings: Jessica (left) and Jonathan (right).

do other students with disabilities do in class without “built-in” supports or advocates?

Along with recognizing my physical weaknesses from my disability, I conversely recognized my strengths belonged in most upper body activities: throwing a ball, dribbling, and hanging on the monkey bars. I felt comfortable with these activities and often exhaled a sigh of relief when the teacher revealed upper body activities on our agenda. I knew in those moments my peers saw me as equal. I loved picking up all the balls from around the gym and trying to throw them into the ball box from afar at the end of class. I craved any moment that allowed me to use competencies that weren’t running or kicking. When our gym class fundraised for Jump for Heart every year, I was always ready to participate. Jumping for me was easy. I’d lift my left prosthetic leg and only jump with my right leg. Double Dutch was heaven for me, mimicking my home experiences of hopping around house. Jumping was a celebration of the strength of my sound, right leg. Even in physical education class!

Perhaps my worst moment in physical education class was during our school’s Disability Week. For some reason, the physical education teacher thought it was important for the whole school to sit down together and talk about my disability. We all moved to the library (maybe for more of a

“serious” setting). I remember everyone was to sit “crisscross apple sauce” on the floor, which was already a particularly uncomfortable seating position for me. I was called to the front of the room (with about 200 pairs of eyes on me), and we talked about the reason why I “looked different” and how disabilities are “inconveniences.” I remember being called up from the crowd, struggling to stand up from the seated position on the floor, and walking in front of the entire student population to the front. Without any primer, I was asked to talk to the school about all the ways that I was different. I remember standing there in front of the school sobbing in embarrassment. Now as an adult, I’m understanding how traumatic this moment was for me as a young girl.

Not all my gym class memories were bad. I’d argue that most of them were playful and fun! My favorite memory from physical education class is when we would stretch after our warmup jog. We would all sit on the floor and complete static stretches. For me, it was always hard for me to complete a static hamstring stretch on my prosthetic side. Whenever I would full bend at the waist, the top of my prosthetic would jab into my hip and create bruises. In this activity, I would improvise by detaching my prosthetic from my body underneath my pants. I would bend over with ease, making it look like I could touch my toes. If you think about it, it’s impossible to have a tight hamstring on a prosthetic leg! My peers were so impressed with my newfound ability! This was a small taste of the gym class “praise” I secretly desired.

When I got to grade 3 through 5, I ended up in my mom’s physical education class. Many years later, she told me that she adapted much of her curriculum so I could feel empowered and included. She did this through creating “options” in games. For any scooter games, she would offer another game to the class that had more of an upper body focus. This allowed all students to have autonomy in the classroom and to choose to enjoy physical education through avenues that they enjoyed. I didn’t realize her intentionality during this time. Again, this made me wonder, what do all the other kids with disabilities do when they need an advocate in class? What would my experience be like if I didn’t have my siblings or mother nearby? Would I not be as keen to participate in physical activity?

Middle School

In middle school we began our fitness testing. These activities included push-ups, sit ups, flexibility (hamstring stretch), a sprint test, and pull ups. I remember the teacher placing a big “X” going over my sprint test. I didn’t complete any other movement as a substitution of the test. I now know that is because fitness tests are often mandated by the state. They didn’t care about how students might need to adapt; They just wanted their metrics for the competencies they deemed as being important. I also remember this was the first time I was introduced to Body Mass Index (BMI) metrics. In middle

school, my BMI read as a 19. Underweight. I was praised for this number. It didn't take long for this interaction to fuel unhealthy beauty standards. I also began to question what a healthy BMI was supposed to be for someone who has a disabled body. These internal questions continued for years after this simple interaction that took place in the school's locker room.

Physical education in middle school was taught by our volleyball coach. I enjoyed our sport-specific modules because I could usually find a strong area of competency within any sport. For soccer, I played as the goalie. For volleyball, I could ace out our opposing team without a doubt. With basketball, I practiced three pointers to make up for my deficiency of running up and down the court. In our basketball module, there were many times I would stay down near my team's basket and wait for both teams to return the play from the other side of the court. Running up and down the court grew to become very taxing for me. Because of this, I was usually picked close-to-last by our peers for scrimmages. It didn't take long for me to notice the decrease of playing time during these scenarios. In these moments, I quickly befriended the other students who were also consistent last picks. We both had the same amount of bench time and had camaraderie in sharing the same negative feelings in these moments.

High School

High school physical education was also taught by a woman. I wonder what my experiences would have been like if my physical education classes were taught by men? Changing for class was always uncomfortable for me. I sometimes struggled to put my tennis shoe on my leg prosthetic foot. Or to pull my pant leg past my immovable ankle. All these things were under a time constraint right at the start of class. It was a daunting and stressful way to start class.

In high school, I still loved playing games that involved throwing or catching. As you can imagine, kickball has been the historical dreaded game in class throughout my history in physical education. Once I got to high school, however, I noticed I wasn't as much of a "field flower" as I was in the past. In middle school, I would avoid these mini games completely. Now, I started to become more aware of my body's competencies and strategizing against my peers. In kickball, my "go-to" plan was to bunt the ball. This would give me enough time to attack the base before getting tapped out. Dodgeball was another fun game that offered some scheming. Although my lower half of my body was a little delayed when running away from the ball, when it was time to strike out my competition, I knew it was my time to shine. I remember my brother coaching me on how to catch a dodgeball and where to throw to strike out the offender. Those are the memories I choose to cling to when remembering my physical education experience: camaraderie, leaning into

my own physical activity competencies, and eventually discovering my love of sports.

Most of my physical education experiences existed before I knew adaptive sports existed. When I was fifteen years old, I learned what a carbon fiber “running leg” was. Through a gracious donor, I was finally able to receive my own. I remember having a sense of relief that I was going to soon be fast in gym class. Our physical education teacher, who was also the high school track coach, watched closely as I addressed the learning curve of a prosthetic running leg. I could tell there was this lingering hopefulness that I would soon be fast. Blade runner = Unstoppable! After a few weeks, the excitement began to fade as I was still the slowest in physical education class. That realization seemed like the final nail in my coffin, understanding that I will always be deficient in certain competencies in relation to my able-bodied peers. The conversation in physical education class changed from “try all of these new activities” to “save your good leg as much as you can!”

At this point, I was able to choose my own physical education activities if the curriculum in the class wasn’t inclusive. For example, every so often we would run the mile in class as a fitness test. The physical education teacher allowed me to choose an activity as a substitute. For me, I usually chose to walk a few laps instead or go to the weight room with a friend. I liked having independence in these scenarios. No one knows my body better than I do! Thinking back on these moments, I’m reminded of my mother’s philosophies when she taught me many years before. I wonder what class settings would look like if we honored the preferences of *all* students when designing the physical education curriculum? Would we, conversely, have a more active physical education class? Could this naturally create more of an inclusive physical education setting?

Conclusion

All these moments were pivotal in my journey of developing resiliency, self-awareness, and critical thinking skills. It’s important to mention, however, that these socioemotional skills were primarily developed through vehicles of autonomy and enjoyment in physical activity. My hope is that all youth have positive physical education experiences that contribute to physical literacy practices.

5

THE SEARCH FOR A MEDAL

Paul Tandy

My name is Paul Tandy, and I grew up in Anchorage, AK. I was originally born in Taiwan, but because of my blindness, and the fear that my biological parents couldn't take proper care of me, they ended up putting me up for adoption.

I am the third youngest child out of nine siblings. My parents adopted seven of us, and had two biological children of their own. My parents instilled a great work ethic in me, and after high school, I moved to California, to attend a center that was designed to help blind and visually impaired adults live independently.

Elementary School

Rather than attending public school on a regular basis, most of my siblings were home schooled by my mother, in conjunction with Family Partnership, a home school curriculum for Christian families. I was not able to be home schooled, as Family partnership did not have the resources to teach a blind student. Thus, beginning in the first grade, I attended public school, rather than attending a half day, like I had previously done in kindergarten.

Unlike other blind students, I did not take part in special education classes. I was expected to complete all of my classroom assignments, just like my sighted peers. A teacher of the visually impaired would sit with me in class for the first few years of elementary school, which proved to be very helpful in learning to read and write braille, and learning other subjects that the teacher would teach. When it came to gym or physical education, it was no different.

My gym teacher's name was Ms. Bushman. When in physical education or gym, there was someone to assist me in all of the activities other students were enjoying. Sometimes, it was the teacher of the visually impaired teaching me, other times, it was an individual working in the field of physical education who would help me throughout the period.

I was very blessed to live in Anchorage, Alaska. They were one of the very first states to help those with disabilities be successful in physical education. If the district knew of a person with a disability taking a physical education course, they attempted to have an individual trained in that field, work with that person on a one-on-one basis. Pam, who I frequently worked with in gym, was just one of the teachers hired by the district to help those with disabilities, be successful in physical education.

There were multiple activities that took place during gym class. Some activities proved to be accessible, others were not.

I found running around the gym with my classmates very enjoyable. I would either run sighted guide with the person assisting me, or in the rare circumstance, would run with another sighted peer. At the time, I loved running, so this was a definite thrill for me. However, other activities were not so accessible.

Although Ms. Bushman attempted to accommodate me, there were a few times that she would teach us how to play a specific sport, which proved to be a little challenging. Volleyball was a prime example of this. Once the ball was served from the other side, another peer or teacher would have to catch it for me.

Early on, I don't recall ever feeling especially left out during activities like this. After all, I had someone there, designed to help me when I couldn't achieve certain tasks independently. Besides, most of the kids loved volleyball, which wasn't interesting to me, so seeing their excitement gave me more of a thrill than being able to play the game completely on my own.

While I did have an assistant in gym, I did try to be as independent as possible. Occasionally, the class would race around the gym, and according to former teachers of mine, I would run along with the other students, and stop, just before hitting a wall. Although I used a cane on a regular basis, I don't recall using one in gym, as many of the activities required hands on teaching, which the cane would only prove to get in the way of during most lessons.

Having an aide proved to be very helpful in physical education, but it did have its downfalls. One evening, I was spending time with a classmate after school. We were discussing the different dance moves we had been taught previously in the week in gym.

"I won't lie to you," she explained. "But if you didn't have that lady with you while we were learning those dance moves, I probably would have chosen you as a dancing partner," she told me.

When my friend explained to me why she didn't want to interact with me in physical education, it hurt, but it wasn't surprising. I mean, if put in their shoes, I probably wouldn't have wanted to hang with someone who had a teacher around them at all times either.

Students enjoyed physical education because it was a relaxed environment. It allowed them to yell and cheer. To goof off, and tell the occasional joke or two. With a teacher around me at all times, students felt like they couldn't be themselves around me, so throughout much of my time in gym in elementary school, it felt like they just avoided me altogether. I probably didn't notice this until around fourth grade and beyond.

One Monday morning, Pam asked Ms. Bushman if we could teach the students how to play goalball, a game for the blind and visually impaired. Ms. Bushman thought that teaching the students about a game for the blind was a wonderful idea. Maybe it would help those who were sighted understand how blind people compete in sports.

A week later, Pam brought in all of the equipment for goalball, and together, we explained to them the objective of the game. With the rules explained, the students and I began to play. Once the game was in session, it was evident the students hated it. One of the rules of goalball is that each participant must wear a blind fold at all times, which I'm positive, most of the students did not enjoy.

Once the period was over, and game play had ended, the students were less than enthusiastic about the time they had just spent in gym than usual.

"That's an idiotic game," I heard one of my classmates remark.

While playing goalball was a good idea in theory, this left me feeling more isolated from my peers than ever before. I appreciated both Pam and Ms. Bushman trying to accommodate me, but it was obvious that my class wasn't interested in a game for people with disabilities, and more than anything, I just wanted to put the experience behind me.

Middle School

Luckily, when I entered junior high, physical education was no longer a required period. That said, if not in a physical education class, it was required by the school district that each student join some sort of after school physical sport or activity. This might include activities like cross country skiing, swimming, weightlifting, wrestling or volleyball. Being that my math teacher at the time was the weightlifting instructor, I chose this particular activity during the first semester of my seventh-grade year.

I found the weightlifting class to be pretty simple. Whenever I wanted a set of weights, most of the students were very willing to help me find whatever weight I was looking for that day. I never had an aide in that class, which I think, proved to be very helpful, especially socially. In addition to

lifting weights, we would often run around the gym and use the treadmill for other physical exercise. If I needed assistance running alongside my peers in the class, most times, people were willing to run with me. While only one semester, I very much enjoyed the weightlifting class with the guys.

As the winter approached, and the temperature began to drop, I wanted to find another afterschool activity to keep me occupied. I wanted to join the wrestling team, but my parents had other ideas.

All of my older siblings had been in a cross-country ski club of some sort in the past. My parents were very big fans of skiing, and they wanted us to get better at our technique. Although I wasn't keen on joining the cross-country ski team at my school, my parents really didn't give me an option.

There was always a teacher of some sort present with me, while I skied. This was to ensure that I stayed close to the group while we practiced.

Practices were either held on a trail by the school, or at a local park. There are two kinds of cross-country skiing that most skiers choose to do for competition. There is classic skiing, which is easier and more relaxing, and skate skiing, which is more difficult, but quite a bit faster. Every few weeks, our school would compete in cross country ski races.

Each race was either a classic ski race, or a skate ski race. Unfortunately, I was never taught how to skate ski. As you might imagine, this proved to be quite a disadvantage when the skate skiing races took place. I was allowed to "compete" in them, but with classic skiing being the only skiing I knew how to do, I never had a chance at being a competitor.

With an adult with me at all times during cross country skiing, my social situation proved to be much like the experience in elementary school. Once again, the students knew of my existence, but didn't really interact with me. It probably should have bothered me more than it did, but I was already used to being by myself, so I think I had just accepted this as my normal.

Truth be told, at the time, I didn't really care that the ski instructors didn't teach me how to skate ski. I didn't really want to be there in the first place, so it wasn't a huge loss for me. But looking back at it, I wish I would have learned that skill, if not to improve my technique, but also to be competitive during those select races.

High School and Wrestling

When my sophomore year of high school approached, my parents finally allowed me to join the wrestling team. It took a little arguing, I mean, persuading, to join, but finally, I was on the team.

My wrestling coach's name was Shawn Silverthorn. I can't say enough good things about that man. From the very start, he treated me like an equal on the team. Much like weightlifting, I did not have a teacher present during

practices. Sure, there were coaches who were also teachers at the school, but they were designed to help everyone, not just me.

Come practice, I was expected to take part in every activity the team was made to do by the coaches. If we ran laps around the school, I did it alongside them. Not all students were comfortable running with me on their arm, but I always made it work.

In order to improve our mental strength, the coaches would have us run around the school in an allotted time. Should one person miss the time permitted, we were forced to do it all over again. Once everyone made the lap in the time requested, the coaches would decrease the permitted time, and once again, we would all sprint around the school. This would happen six or seven times, until we were finally allowed water.

Just like my teammates, I was expected to make the allotted time around the school. Even though I hate running with a passion, I finally felt like I was truly on an equal playing field as everyone else. No one was going to give me any special treatment because of my blindness, and I appreciated that very much.

In the beginning of my wrestling career, I felt I was learning right along with my teammates. But as the technique became more and more difficult, I felt like I was falling behind, and not learning as much as my peers. With 30 other individuals on the team, I can't get upset with the coaches not being as available as I would have liked. Luckily, I had friends who had been wrestling for quite some time, and they were also able to assist me when the coaches were unavailable.

While very appreciative of those who assisted me, there were times when I felt like there were certain moves that I was never taught how to do properly. With wrestling being such a close contact sport, I can understand how some students, especially the girls on our team, might find it awkward to teach me certain technique. Qualifying in the 113-pound weight class, most of the girls on my team were my size, and I practiced with them on a regular basis. Sure, I practiced with "some of the guys," but most of them were heavier, thus making the match, I'll be it practice, unfair.

Initially, I'm not so sure my team really knew how to treat me. There had been visually impaired wrestlers in the state of Alaska, but never had there been one completely blind, such as myself. There is only one rule when wrestling a blind wrestler, which is to remain in physical contact the entire match. While the team eventually accepted this rule, some did not like it very much. A traditional wrestler is separate when the match begins, and are only in contact with their competitor when trying to make a move on their adversary. When my teammates practiced with me, they had to abide by this rule, which completely changed the way they wrestled.

Wrestling tournaments took place every couple of weekends. Occasionally, the tournament would be hours away. When this was the case, we would take

a bus to the school where the tournament would take place, find a classroom to unpack our sleeping bag and other belongings, and sleep there in the evenings. Don't worry, all of the girls slept in a separate room from the guys.

Being that I was a new wrestler as a sophomore, I was part of the junior varsity line up. But that didn't stop me from wrestling varsity wrestlers right off the bat.

Our first tournament was against a few smaller schools. Most of our competitors were quite gifted, being that they had been wrestling for years. I had been sitting at this tournament since the previous day and was tired of doing nothing while the varsity line-up wrestled. So, when our varsity 113-pounder injured his shoulder, I asked Silverthorn if I could go in for him. The answer was yes, and there I was, competing in my very first match, just two weeks into my wrestling career.

I ended up competing in three matches that day. And to the surprise of no one, each match ended up being a pin for my rival. I felt defeated.

Although discouraged, I knew that if I ever quit, I'd never win. A few weeks later, while wrestling an exhibition match, I pinned my very first competitor.

The feeling of victory was unbelievable. Wrestling is the hardest sport out there, with each match being a six-minute workout, and I knew that. With a wrestler with very similar experience as me, I was not only able to compete, but be successful.

I ended up winning five matches as a first-year wrestler. My team, as well as the coaches, were very impressed. With less than a season of technique, I probably would have been lucky to win one, much less more than that.

The top two wrestlers of each weight class in each school would end up going to the regional tournament. Being that there were only two wrestlers in the 113-pound weight class at my school, me being one of them, I automatically qualified for the tournament.

It turned out that the 113-pound weight class was very small that year. Thus, after losing my very first match, I continued to receive byes, which allowed me to advance in the tournament. When I finally had to wrestle, I had only one man to beat before making it to the state tournament. Unfortunately, I lost that match, and went home in hopes to do better that following year.

I ended up improving drastically in my junior year of high school and ended up winning almost twenty matches. Finally, I wasn't just the blind wrestler that other schools at heard about, but now was a force to be reckoned with. To have respect from my competitors was an amazing feeling. It was truly something I had never experienced before. Unfortunately, though, I would end up going to regions again, only to lose to the same wrestler from the previous year at the exact same point in the tournament. I was heartbroken. I went to the sidelines and cried and cried.

The following year was my senior year of high school. More than anything, I wanted to make it to the state tournament. If I could place in the top five, I'd consider my wrestling career a success. But the year began quite rocky.

When wrestling my very first match, I was pinned in ten seconds. It was humiliating. But as the season progressed, my wrestling form began to take place, and I was winning matches again. But this year, I had something more to worry about.

Unlike my previous years as a wrestler, I actually had to work on keeping my weight down. At the beginning of the season, I weighed in at around 120 pounds. In order to continue wrestling in my same weight class, I needed to lose over seven pounds. I didn't want to wrestle in the 120-pound weight class, as many of my competitors were a lot stronger than me, and it was a harder bracket overall. So, I worked hard every day to keep the weight down.

There are a variety of tasks that wrestlers will do to keep their weight down. Some will eat very little a couple days leading into weigh-ins, some might spit in a bottle, and others might work out with multiple layers of clothes on. I did all the above. If a competitor is even an ounce over their designated weight, they are disqualified from the tournament or meet. I didn't work this hard to be disqualified, on the account of not making weight.

On the day of weigh-ins, I would head into the school, find a male teammate, and head to the locker room. Later, I would stand on the scale, and they would read me my exact weight. Because of hard work and dedication I never was disqualified from a tournament because of a weight issue.

That year, the 113-pound weight class was stacked. Unlike previous years, I actually had to wrestle my way through the tournament. If I finished sixth or better, I'd make it to state. I ended up placing fifth at regions, and for the very first time as a wrestler, I finally received my very first medal.

To finally receive a medal for all of my hard work was amazing! I had earned this on my own, and no one could take that away from me. I was so thankful to all of those who had helped me get to this point. But there was still one more goal to reach, in order for my career to be a success, at least in my eyes.

I remember being very nervous when I walked into the state tournament. These were all very talented wrestlers, who had earned a spot at this prestigious event. Silverthorn asked how I was doing, and I explained to him how I felt.

"I want you to think about your favorite song, and focus on that," he told me.

I took his words of advice and ended up winning my first match. Perhaps this wasn't going to be that bad after all. Well, I was mistaken, and I ended up losing my second match. When it was all said and done, I was once again one spot away from placing in the state tournament, only to lose with my goal in sight.

Once again, I cried and cried.

“You’ve completed one chapter of your life, and I can’t wait to see the next one,” one of my coaches told me.

Some Reflections

At the time, I wasn’t looking at the next chapter in life, I was too focused on not achieving my personal goal. Looking back at it today, I’m very thankful for the opportunities that wrestling gave me. Sure, did I feel like my blindness caused me to have a disadvantage at times when learning? Absolutely. But without a shadow of a doubt, when it comes to all the physical activities that I was involved in as a child, I felt like I fit in the most as a wrestler.

Wrestling allowed me to truly be an equal with my peers. Except for the constant contact rule, I was the same as all of my competitors and teammates. No one ever wondered if I received special treatment because of my visual impairment, they all knew that I earned every single win I had ever achieved.

We can adapt certain sports for those with disabilities, and I think in some circumstances, we should do that in order for all to be on an equal playing field. But speaking from my personal experience, the bigger the adaptation made, the more the person with a disability stands out. I think it’s imperative that an individual find an activity such as an afterschool sport, to truly get the absolute most they can get out of physical activities.

Much of gym and physical education is very social, and I never felt like I fit in. Personally, I think that it’s very crucial for a person with a disability to put themselves in a situation, where they might be able to be, as close as possible, on an equal playing field as their sighted counterparts. In my opinion, it will prove to help them in both their personal and professional lives.

Everyone wants to feel respected and accomplished. Wrestling gave me that respect from my peers, as well as confidence in myself. It forced me to get out of my comfort zone by having no choice, but to interact with other students from many different locations. And while I am a blind person in a sighted world, I found all of those skills learned while being on the team, very important to this very day.

6

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MAINSTREAM (INCLUSIVE) AND ADAPTIVE (SELF-CONTAINED) PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES

Mikayla Shea Heston

Throughout my educational career, I have participated in a multitude of sports, adaptive (self-contained) physical education, and mainstream (inclusive) physical education classes. Physical education was an outlet for me to not only better myself but show people that disabilities should not be associated with sedentary lifestyles or as an excuse to get out of physical activity. My parents were strong advocates of making sure that I was mainstreamed throughout my K–12 education. I remember my first educational aid, Mia Admire, always pushed for my inclusion in the gym setting. Even though I was young and didn't grasp the importance of advocacy and inclusion, I knew I deserved equal opportunity and access to physical education. I remember using my time in physical education to train for the Special Olympics, which I participated in for 13 years. I always looked forward to practicing running with my gait trainer and throwing tennis balls as far as I could. In 2006, I competed in the 50m assisted run, and I won my heat for the first time. In addition, I received a handful of 1st place ribbons and medals during my 13 years. I gained confidence and independence participating in this national organization.

Being a part of the Special Olympics allowed me to connect with the disability community and allowed me to embrace my disability identity without judgment. See Figure 6.1.

One of my first APE related memories about physical education was in 3rd grade, when I was asked by Mike Rogers, the PE teacher at my elementary school, to do a summersault at the gymnastics performance at the weekly Wednesday assembly. Despite the stage of the gym not being wheelchair accessible, my father and a few staff members carried me up to the stage so that I could perform. That was the highlight of my elementary school physical



FIGURE 6.1 Mikayla's first time competing in Special Olympics, 2005; Mia Admire on her left, her mother on her right.

education experience. I remember how confident I felt after the applause I received as I stood up with assistance to take a proper bow for my athletic demonstration. Everyone at my elementary school was supportive and they made sure I could participate in all physical education classes and activities; I was even part of the jump rope club. I had a decent start to my athletic path, and it felt like I would get better as I got more attuned to my abilities.

Middle school was probably the best 3 years of my mainstream physical education experience. Bruce Richardson was the most adaptable and willing physical education teacher that I had during my K–12 education. But, it didn't start out that way. He was hesitant at first and sidelined me during the first few weeks of 6th grade. This wouldn't be the case for long. Although I had an amazing APE experience with Bruce, there were barriers that needed to be addressed. After one of my classes, my father decided to have a talk with Bruce about being more inclusive and trying to incorporate my abilities



FIGURE 6.2 Mikayla's last day of 7th grade; the photo is of her and Bruce, both giving a thumbs up.

in all of the class's activities. Even though I wasn't included in that one-on-one conversation, I immediately felt and saw how Bruce wanted to interact with and include me in the gym settings and during extracurricular activities.

I remember the sense of accomplishment when I bumped a volleyball over the net independently rather than having to bump the ball to a teammate and rely on them for assistance. It took 13 months between classes and going to Saturday open gym; but because of one-on-one training and support I was able to play volleyball in my own way. The adaptive training and rules Bruce made helped me gain confidence and independence in physical education. He also came to the Special Olympics during 6th and 7th grade to assist me in the 50-meter assisted run.

Bruce did a lot of meaningful things for me, one of the most memorable is when he was going to retire back in 2011 after my 6th grade year. However, he decided to stay until 2013 so I could still have the opportunity to have the adaptations and accommodations I needed to be successful in the physical education classes and extracurricular activities I did in middle school. See Figures 6.2 and 6.3.

In 8th grade, my middle school got a mini gym with weightlifting equipment and other core exercise stations, and my 8th grade science teacher, Brandon



FIGURE 6.3 Mikayla participating in 8th grade Special Olympics.

Arn, held after school workout sessions twice a week. My parents would let me stay since it was close to our house in Boring. Those workout sessions were a great bonding experience for my parents, peers, teacher and me. I was able to not only build and maintain my muscle mass, but I had developed new social skills in relation to friendly competition and encouragement to become stronger.

Unfortunately, when I left and attended high school freshman year, my experience with physical education got flipped upside down for the worse. My high school was built in 1968, 32 years before the American with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Even though there were renovations made after I graduated in 2017, there were many errors, inaccessibility, and laziness of the school district that made my high school and physical education experience a nightmare.

My freshman year, I was mostly isolated from the class. Not only was I put in the corner, but I didn't have a proper educational aid until halfway through the semester. I fondly remember one time my freshman PE class was going to go exercise on the track. However, the instructors just asked me to stay in the gym and independently exercise with my temporary aid at the time. This was not only a shameful practice, but it showed the ableism of the physical education department as well.



FIGURE 6.4 Mikayla and Brandon Arn.

Sophomore year we only had our health class, but unfortunately I experienced a similar issue. Because they were severely understaffed in the special education department at my high school, they wanted me to drop the class so they could put me in a study hall to ‘help my learning and time management’. But in reality, they didn’t want to put in the effort and funding to provide educational aids for a simple health class. This made me feel like they were going to take me out of all my mainstream classes, including physical education so I would be in a special education class for the schools’ convenience. They wanted to destroy my dignity, academic rights, and independence; but I refused and kept taking my honor courses and physical education class and passed all my classes that year.

Junior year, I was put, along with my current partner who is on the autism spectrum, into the Adaptive Physical Education class. This time, I was put in there because it was the only PE class that would fit in my schedule. I was



FIGURE 6.5 Mikayla's father and Sierra Yates assisting her in a long jump.

in a half day charter school, which allowed kids in certain school districts to get college credits and hands-on experience with their desired career paths. Although I am grateful that this was an option, there were definitely flaws and critiques I have with the APE class in general. The class was very unorganized and we had very little adaptive sports equipment to work with as a whole. Most of my time, my partner and I would just talk and socialize as he pulled me in a worn down adaptive sled. While it was nice to bond with my partner, I didn't feel like sitting in the adaptive sled while being pulled was moderate exercise. It might have strengthened my core for a small duration, but due to cerebral palsy, it didn't last long term. In addition, most of the students were scattered around the gym, and this resulted in a lack of team collaboration and positive social effects of physical education. The way I would define social effects is any value, morals or methodology that

students in PE used to better themselves and work efficiently with others. In my opinion, this is something that is not prioritized, especially with students who have disabilities. I oftentimes felt frustrated because most of the time, the aids in the class were not assigned directly to me and oftentimes the work that they should have done got pawned off to my parents. I completely support the idea of those with multiple disabilities and medical needs having a personal aid for safety and unfortunately more likely liability reasons. However, when that becomes a deterrent to the students who are seen as independent ‘enough’, we see those students get left behind in APE. The only benefit that I got is the PE career requirement of a job shadow, which has nothing to do directly with APE or PE. Because of this, APE was probably the most unproductive period of my high school career; and I got minimal exercise, which defeated the purpose of that class.

My senior year in high school was difficult to manage because of two reasons. Firstly, I had a lot of tension between the lack of service and the push to “make me more independent.” I did not have routine aid at my home high school during this school, which went against my Individualized Education Plan Requirements. Schools legally are not allowed to do this under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. I was in a middle ground, having to choose between being in special education and becoming an adult. In addition, the fact that I was going to two different schools on the same day made the balance of services I needed for school and physical education nearly impossible. Thankfully, one of the assistant principals suggested that I enroll in the district web academy health/exercise management class. The semester long class was a hybrid of health education and logging exercise throughout the duration of the term. Even though it was a last resort and a way for my high school to scapegoat from providing an aid, it was an enjoyable experience. I learned a lot; definitely more than my sophomore health class. In addition, they included a unit on types of disabilities and how exercise can be adaptive.

While physical education was challenging, I had some positive experiences in sport and movement in high school through events that related to disability extracurricular activities. The two I remember most were the New Years dance and Meet of Champions. The New Years dance was the creation of one of the aids at my high school. The purpose of this was to allow students and young adults in adult learning programs who have disabilities to connect, exercise and have fun. Meet of Champions was a nonprofit started in 1986 to have high school students with disabilities compete in track and field events. These selective opportunities were my only chance to compete fairly against others with disabilities, and this saddens and frustrates me. Most high schools in the United States don’t offer adaptive sports; and because of this these students with disabilities are more likely to develop comorbidities and develop mental health issues. We need to address this lack of equity

so that high school students with disabilities have access to sports both in physical education and in extracurricular activities.

After finishing high school, I started to attend Oregon State University in the hopes of going into a field related to biomechanics. I took their adaptive physical activity course during my freshman year of college, and it was better than what I got in high school. Unfortunately, the downside is the building of the physical activity course does not have an elevator, so APA has to be held in the basement level of the building. In addition, the ramp is steep to the basement, so it is not the safest or effective alternative for both wheelchair and mobility aid users because it does not meet ADA standards.

Sophomore year of college I would decide to try something different, and that is part of my current chapter in my APA journey. As a child, I always wanted to try martial arts to improve my hand eye coordination and strength. Even though I didn't get that opportunity when I was younger, I have got to pursue my lifelong passion in college. In April of 2018, I walked by an activity



FIGURE 6.6 Mikayla holding a bronze medal.



FIGURE 6.7 Screenshot of Mikayla and Julie Koyama Sensei from a video titled “Mikayla Heston is a Judo Inspiration.”

which I learned was a martial art called judo. I was frightened but intrigued by the beautiful execution of the throwing during my first practice. However, with time and patience, I was able to gain strength and coordination to throw from my knees. Judo has both standing and groundwork aspects which allows me to adapt the techniques and throws to my disabilities. In February of 2020, I competed at my first tournament and got bronze in my division. Two years later, I won my first match in Ontario, OR. Despite having a seizure during my first match of the tournament, I was able to bounce back from the win; which happens to have been recorded and posted to the United States Judo Federation website and YouTube page. Getting my first win at this tournament was such an accomplishment. When the USJF Director Mitchell Palacio interviewed me and asked, “What do you have to say for yourself?” I put my arm around my teammate, gave a thumbs up and said, “It’s awesome!”



FIGURE 6.8 Rod Conduragis Sensei, one of the instructors of Obukan Judo sitting with Mikayla on the pedestal.

Currently, I am assisting as a senior student in the Judo Physical Activity Course for about a year now. There were a few accommodation issues since the class is held in the wrestling room, which is in the same building as my APA course I took freshman year. Although it took effort and advocacy, I was able to get a section of judo to be relocated to one of the gyms with suitable wheelchair access. I hope that I can continue to do judo and earn my Shodan (1st degree black belt) and hopefully pursue further opportunities in this sport.

I have lived an active life, and I push myself to remain physically active and find new outlets that I can use to cope with the disability and stress of life. From ziplining, to rock climbing, to helping children with disabilities in OSU's IMPACT program, I love testing myself, helping others and younger generations gain confidence and providing guidance for them to embrace their true potential and abilities. In addition, I have had great opportunities in the IMPACT program to work aside several graduate students. The IMPACT program is designed to maximize interaction and inclusion of children with disabilities, and I learned a lot about APE and how my experience with physical education could have been maximized.

I will continue with this active lifestyle so that my disability won't wizen me. Exercise has been a sanctuary for me when I feel like my disabilities are consuming my energy and willingness to thrive as a neurodiverse student and scientist. I am studying kinesiology in order to better understand why people with disabilities are underrepresented in sports and advocate for students and athletes who identify as persons with disabilities.

7

THE EMPTY PROMISE OF “YOU CAN DO ANYTHING”

Shaelyn West

In the Beginning, There Were Eggs

The first thing I ever remember is being three years old in a pediatric hospital getting diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Not the diagnosis news itself, that I don't remember. Instead, the very first memory of my entire 27-year existence is waking up to a nurse asking me if I want more eggs, me declining them, and then immediately going back to sleep. There's really nothing too profound about the egg moment itself, that just happens to be the exact moment I remember. Saying no to hospital eggs.

I'm a pretty dramatic person, I love making things deeper than they need to be, but there's nothing deeper about me not wanting more eggs. I've done some seriously intense digging into the trenches of my soul in hot pursuit of some deeper meaning behind my consciousness being shaken awake by a nurse with some watery, entirely seasoningless scrambles, but I've always come up empty handed. All I know is for those that believe your life really starts off from the point you can first remember, I truly became a person on August 17, 2000, when I awoke in a hospital bed and said, “no more eggs.”

Moving forward into the absolute fever dream that is life as the Shaelyn we all know and love (hi, by the way. I'm Shaelyn and it's wonderful to meet you), the following dozen or so initial life memories are of more hospital things. Stuff like me taking blood sugar tests on my forearm like a champ despite wailing every single time my finger was pricked, a massive art piece made of dozens of objects in assorted shapes and colors that hung in the middle of the hospital atrium, and a room full of helium balloons which I then walked around and delivered to the other kids on my floor.

When I reflect back on what I am able to recollect of my life, that's truly where it all started. I don't remember a single thing about my human existence before my pancreas decided it had enough (a.k.a. got attacked by my own immune system after getting a particularly nasty virus from a fellow preschooler, but it's easier on the soul to anthropomorphize my lazy, good for nothing endocrine system). Everything prior to the 'betes is radio static. Not one single thing before the Great Egg Rejection. I've always felt like I've always had diabetes.

The Great Realization

The life I've lived with type 1, a disease where one of my vital organs has shut down entirely for the rest of forever, is all I know—yet it took me up until my mid-twenties to ever realize I was disabled. Both this realization itself and the (still ongoing) attempt that followed to try and wrap my head around the two plus decades I spent disabled by something I never labeled as a disability have been wild to experience.

I've sat around trying to think of one other disease in which a vital organ fails, resulting in some poor random dude requiring daily medicine they cannot survive without for even two days, that I wouldn't automatically consider a disability and I can't. I would never respond to that poor random dude saying he's disabled by saying "That's not a disability, your [insert organ here] just doesn't work. Are you only still alive thanks to the technological culmination of decades of scientific and medicinal breakthroughs? Sure! Does this affliction follow you around like a dense and shadowy gray mist, one which carries with it a sudden ominous chill and haunts you until the day you die? Absolutely! Is every single aspect of your life infinitely more complicated and substantially less pleasant due to the management and subsequent unavoidable burnout caused by managing the disease you got when your [insert organ here] stopped working? Yooooou bet! But you're fine, right? That's not a disability" —partially because it's a mouthful, also because it's strikingly rude, but overwhelmingly more so simply because the concept is asinine. A disability is any disabling affliction (you know, like CHRONIC ORGAN FAILURE). I guess I just never connected the dots that this applied to my specific chronic organ failure and the cornucopia of symptoms and side effects it comes with as well.

For a long time, I didn't give that too much thought. I figured the fact that me viewing this lil' sudden organ failure and the overwhelmingly pervasive, all-encompassing, inescapable, and often physically devastating both short term AND lifelong side effects o'mine as just some minor inconvenience was just me being unbelievably cool and chill, as per usual. I assumed maybe since I was diagnosed so young and never knew anything beside the life I have now, maybe I just felt like having diabetes was "normal." Even after I realized why

I had gone so long without giving myself the label I now embrace and use to empower myself, I didn’t really feel like it mattered that I spent two decades entirely unaware I had a legitimate disability. In fact, at first I felt almost proud of and inspired by that. I thought I must be a pretty capable person if I was so uninhibited by my disability that I didn’t realize I even had it, right?

The only reason I ever even had this “wait wait wait ... I’m actually disabled” awakening in the first place was because I began getting involved with the type 1 diabetic online community, commonly abbreviated as the DOC, as I spent more time on Twitter and Instagram in order to keep up with my music festival friends around the country. I’ve always had an comically large collective of diabetics in my social circle whom I’ve gathered over time after spending eight summer sessions at Clara Barton Camp for girls with diabetes, multiple trips to the annual Children With Diabetes conference in Orlando, and being that person that talks to any stranger who gives me literally any decent reason to do so (your girl Shaelyn over here can spot a Dexcom sensor from a mile away).

“Minor” “Inconveniences”

Despite spending so much time with other people who were also disabled by the same illness, the word disability was not one I can ever recall hearing used in regard to me or my friends. Yet suddenly I’m reading tweets from fellow diabetics and seeing hashtags like #invisibledisability and #disabilityrights in posts that highlight things I’ve experienced my entire life. There’s this idea that pediatric endocrinologists, diabetes educators, parents of diabetic children, diabetes camp counselors, teachers, coaches, counselors, etc. love to preach and it’s that you can live a “completely normal life” with type 1 diabetes.

My whole adolescence it’d been drilled into my head that diabetes doesn’t have to “hold you back” and that diabetics can do “anything everyone else can do!” I cannot tell you how many inspirational speeches I have sat through from diabetic mountain climbers, firefighters, ballerinas, race car drivers, and even a didgeridoo player. I remember feel-good picture books about diabetic superheroes who fought crime and sipped juice boxes simultaneously. My family briefly hosted a “famous” stuffed diabetic bear named Rufus that traveled around the country participating in crazy antics with random type 1 families like ours, who sent him plummeting over a local waterfall in a barrel in a highly publicized charity event. The whole big message behind every presentation, book, and symbolic display of teddy bear bravery was that you can do anything you want to do even with diabetes.

The thing is though, you can’t. I know that now. I’ve learned that lesson over and over and over for more than 23 years in countless ways. There’s plenty of stuff I’ve learned firsthand that I can’t do unless my diabetes is

perfectly controlled. It started out with things that didn't really matter to me—I can't be an astronaut (I'm scared of space, who cares?), I can't be a truck driver (have never even considered this as a potential career), I couldn't serve active duty in the US military (again ... never wanted to so why does it matter?)

But then it started affecting the things I *did* want to do. Things like going to sleepovers at new friends' houses. My parents weren't the overprotective type, but a few friends' parents expressed their own discomfort at being responsible for a diabetic child, so I was left out of the slumber party plans. I couldn't go through TSA without being pulled aside and swabbed down, even as a child. I couldn't go barefoot while looking at tide pools because of the risk of injuring my feet, so I had to wear incredibly embarrassing and horrifically uncomfortable swimming shoes. I was reprimanded for laying down in the grass on the playground to watch the clouds during recess (something I have always loved to do) because my teacher "wouldn't be able to know if I had passed out."

These may sound like minor inconveniences, but especially as a kid, this was really jarring as someone who was always told diabetes wouldn't stop me from living a "normal" life. Despite the doubt and insecurity these little instances caused me, I was able to convince myself that since none of this really mattered in the long run, it still meant diabetes wasn't *really* impacting my life.

The Basketball Diaries

All that changed once I became a teenager. I fell in love with the sport of basketball when I was 10 years old and played for the subsequent seven years. My father was my coach for the first three or four years, so naturally, my body's limits were always respected and sitting out during practices to treat my highs and lows was never an issue. My dad knew the challenges I faced as a diabetic child, so I was always praised for not letting it stop me from playing the sport I was so passionate about. As I aged and tryouts for the school team approached, I was a little nervous about playing for a new coach and team that wasn't used to a type 1 player, but diabetes had never stopped me before so I figured it wouldn't stop me ever. I was incredibly wrong.

During tryouts, I had to sit out for a little bit because my blood sugar dropped mid-drill. I kind of got the sense that the coach present wasn't too happy about that request, but I brushed it off as him just being a generally serious, no-nonsense dude. My blood sugar then spiked high, and I asked to run to the fountain and grab some water. The coach asked me why I didn't get water last time we had a break. I explained that my blood sugar wasn't high at the time and that thirst was a big side effect of hyperglycemia. He told me to make it quick, so I chugged and returned to practice even though

I still wasn't feeling well. I tried my best to perform well, but it's hard to do so when your blood sugars are roller-coastering like crazy. I was missing shots I would almost always make otherwise. I got confused during drills because of the brain fog I was experiencing. I had never had an experience like this. My previous coach, aka my father, had always prioritized my health, so I had never had to play high or low before.

Despite this, I still felt I did really well. I figured the coach would see that I was only screwing up when I was dealing with my blood sugars. But that year, I didn't make the team. I remember receiving my decision letter in an envelope, opening it in the car with my dad, and sobbing hysterically. My performance outside of the time I spent dealing with highs and lows was outstanding. I had been so proud of myself. I had been absolutely certain I was going to make the team. I wasn't the best player, but I certainly wasn't the worst, and what was even more confusing and painful for me was seeing that a girl who had missed 2 out of the 3 nights of tryouts for a family vacation and was about equal to me skill-wise had been picked. I cried and cried and cried, but not because of my diabetes. I cried because I truly felt at the time that I simply was not good enough at the sport I loved. I felt like something was wrong with me.

Puberty Strikes

More time passed and as my body's hormones started going buck-wild as puberty set in, my blood sugars became difficult to control. My menstrual cycle especially would absolutely floor me for days at a time. In addition to the intense fluctuations in blood sugar, the cramps, headaches, and back pain that accompany periods were greatly intensified by my fibromyalgia which would then in turn make my blood sugars even worse. For nearly a week out of every month, it was a challenge for me to even get out of bed let alone go to school, play sports, or even just hang out with my friends. My friends and I would sit around talking about how much it sucks to have your period, but I remember sitting there thinking about how much more manageable mine would be without the diabetes. I could handle cramps and back pain, but the blood sugar fluctuations and the pain that accompanies it were causing me issues.

Just like nearly every other teenage girl alive, it was embarrassing for me to talk about my period, but unlike nearly every other teenage girl alive, I had no choice but to talk about it. Diabetes had been presenting me with things I finally started to identify as obstacles, but the combination of diabetes plus the effect my cycle would have on it were more than that. I began to realize there were things I simply couldn't manage. But I wanted to manage them. I felt like I should be able to manage them. *After all, everyone had been telling me for 10+ years now that I could do anything and that diabetes*

should not stand in my way. I've had a 504 plan since I started kindergarten, but it was really difficult for me to come to terms with the fact that I actually needed the accommodations I always believed only existed as a safety net. However, especially with the added challenges puberty brought me, I realized I actually needed to be accommodated.

Typically, teachers wouldn't give me much issue. I had to drink a juice box in class every once in a while. My trips to the nurse were a bit more frequent than other students. But then the need for accommodations increased. I was experiencing intense fatigue and burnout almost every day in the classroom, on the basketball court, out with my friends, and resting at home. I started struggling to get assignments in on time. I would get anxious for tests which would mess with my sugars and render me incapable of taking them during the allotted period. I had a really awful math teacher who gave me never ending issues with my accommodations, but everyone in my life also saw this refusal to accommodate me as what it was—ableist, ignorant, and inexcusable. His behavior was dealt with, and I was able to finish the class.

Gym Nauseum

Then there was gym class. As our gym activities progressed from playing with gigantic parachutes and pushing each other across the floor on little scooters to running laps at 8AM and taking graded physical endurance tests, I fell behind. I had no specific accommodations in my 504 plan for gym class, I had never needed them. Suddenly I started seeing the challenges I faced at basketball tryouts and practices facing me during the school day. After a year playing on the local recreational league, I had made the school basketball team and my teammates had grown accustomed to me doing what I had to do to take care of myself (a few of them were not very nice about it whatsoever, but most tried to understand).

My classmates in gym, however, were less understanding. They weren't cruel to me by any means, but they consistently made comments about how "lucky" I was that I was able to sit out of gym class for a little bit when I was high or low. They expressed that they were jealous that I could go to the nurse instead of running laps. What they didn't know was that despite my general distaste for some of the activities we'd do in gym, I wanted to participate. I wanted to be like every other kid. Diabetes wasn't enabling me to do anything, it was doing the exact opposite, but no one seemed to realize this, including me. I didn't even think to ask to be accommodated, I either muscled through my pain and discomfort or I started disappearing to the nurse entirely.

Lying in a cot in the nurse's office, I felt like a fraud. I had one gym teacher who had been in a horrible accident years prior in which he nearly died. He was left disabled for a while but was able to survive the ordeal and after years

of hard work in rehab was able to coach and teach and run again—and he *never* let us forget it. Most people were inspired by his story, and he would use it to incentivize us to put our all into gym class and sports. When I first started taking his class, knowing about his hardships and previous handicap was really encouraging. I thought I wouldn't have to worry about my need to take it easy sometimes. I was so wrong.

He had not only the "diabetics can live a normal life!" mentality that had been instilled in the minds of so many diabetic children and the adults in their lives, but he was also on the "if I could do it, you can do it too" wave. I vividly remember a day where I pulled him to the side to tell him I was having extreme highs due to my menstrual period. This conversation was mortifying enough as a teenage girl talking to a man, but his response was even more mortifying—if I wanted to go lay down or even just walk my laps instead of running them, *I would have to tell my entire class I have my period*. I tried to explain it was less about the period and more about the diabetes, but he accused me of making excuses. I have absolutely no idea what was going on in his head for any of this to be something acceptable to say to a child, but I immediately opted to "suck it up" and participate in class. For the rest of the day, I was unable to control my sugars and pain. The stress that was put on my body during that phys ed class period was too much to balance out. But I still didn't see this as complications of a disease, I saw it as my own weakness. That one event in my high school gym class led to me being terrified to ask for accommodations throughout the rest of my school career.

The last two years of high school, my diabetes became unmanageable. In previous years I had made perfect attendance, but now I was missing multiple days of school every month. I was still playing basketball, but every practice resulted in complications. My coach had started to bench me during games as a consequence for me sitting out of practice. It seemed like suddenly everyone just expected me to "suck it up." I expected my own self to just "suck it up." It seemed like no one wanted to accommodate me, especially when it came to physical activity. I would just deal with the highs and lows to avoid judgment and unfair treatment from others. I would participate in gym class early in the morning and blame the following day of symptoms on my own inability to perform. I never saw an issue with my school's increasing mismanagement of and ignorance surrounding my disability because I never knew I was disabled in the first place.

At one point, I fractured my finger playing basketball and was excused from gym class until it healed. I sat on the sidelines and watched my classmates participate. This was really embarrassing and alienating, but I had a big old splint on my hand, so no one questioned me. I spent every class sitting on the floor. Suddenly, my blood sugars improved substantially. I was no longer seeing the intense highs and lows throughout the day. I was

less fatigued and confused in my other classes. I brought this up to my doctor, and he suggested I speak to the school about switching around my schedule so that my gym periods were at the end of the day so I wouldn't have to deal with issues at school. I did just that. What followed was something I now recognize as one of the biggest failures to accommodate my disability I have ever experienced.

Instead of rescheduling my gym class, they decided to have me sit out for the rest of the year. The following year, they took gym off my schedule altogether. This was never presented as an accommodation, and I was never given any other option. It was either take the class just like everyone else, schedule the class and sit out yet still have to take tests on activities I wasn't even participating in firsthand, or cut the class entirely. The way this was offered to me felt like such a cop-out. A member of the administration acted like this was something I should be celebrating, and yeah, very cool to not have to be sweaty in front of everyone in my school. But I felt like the whole thing was a personal failure. I felt like something was wrong with *me* that I couldn't get over the hurdle of what I always believed was a manageable disease. When I finally did ask for accommodations, the people who could do something about it just decided it was easier to not work out a solution. This wreaked havoc on my self-esteem. I began to feel burdensome when I asked for help. I wound up quitting basketball altogether because that was the solution I was given for gym class, so I figured it was the solution to the same experiences I was having on the court. Every time my diabetes got in the way, my solution was total avoidance. I started giving up. I started not attempting things in the first place. If all these adults couldn't even figure out what to do with me, why should I bother? There had to be something wrong with *me* that was sucking me of my ability to live life.

Hey ... You're Disabled

I believed this until a few years ago. I've always wondered why I never really saw my childhood friends from camp or the conferences talking about diabetes as what I knew it was really like, a life-altering disease that takes up so much of a person's time and space and focus no matter how well maintained it is. I've wondered why my introduction to the diabetic online community led to me suddenly knowing so many people that were describing themselves as disabled. The answer to this came with the realization that the people who were slowly making me realize the reality of my life were all diagnosed as late teens or adults. They didn't get fed the "you can do everything!" only to be knocked down with misunderstanding, judgment, and discrimination. They lived their childhood lives *actually* able to do anything, only to have that taken away when they were old enough to understand just how much

was taken. They were able to instantly identify ableism and discrimination because they knew they were disabled.

Even the most well controlled case of type 1 diabetes comes with the same requirements—keep a vigilant eye on your blood sugars, always come prepared with treatment and backup supplies, and be extra careful doing just about anything. There's no true way to experience carefree joy in the world of diabetes. There's no real freedom to do whatever makes you happy. There's limited freedom to do anything. Yes, as a person, I have the ability to do most of the things everyone else can do. I can go see live music. I can play basketball. I can run laps around a gymnasium and take tests and get homework in on time. The second diabetes starts to act up, the ease and/or ability to do these things goes out the window. Everything becomes a challenge, a challenge that often shows up with little to no warning. A challenge that often cannot be overcome in time to return to the activity at hand. There's no true freedom when you have the constant worry and hypervigilance and need for preparedness that comes with type 1. That's not a "normal" life and I know that now.

I look back now and am appalled by not only the way I was treated throughout my education/time playing sports, but by the impact that had on me through my adulthood as well. I've been frequenting live music events for the past 13 years, but I only recently began utilizing disability accommodations at music festivals and concerts. I have always joked that if I'm gonna deal with the never-ending list of unpleasantities that diabetes so graciously presents me with, I might as well "take advantage" of it. But those were always just jokes. I never noticed just how much easier time in the ADA section of venues made it to get my diabetes supplies out of my bag or avoid my insulin pump tubing being yanked out in the crowd because I was too busy feeling like I was using my diabetes as an excuse to be somewhere I didn't really deserve to be. When I was turned away from ADA accommodations, I would never argue because I truly believed I wasn't disabled. Now, I know I am, and I recognize these accommodations as something I actually need as opposed to a silly little perk that comes with my silly little lifelong disease. I do not tolerate the discrimination or ignorance, and it's made my life so much easier and as a result, so much more fulfilling.

However, this revelation and the benefits that followed have also come with an often overwhelming sense of sadness, disappointment, anger, and resentment. In just a few years' time, my quality of life has skyrocketed because I lost the fear and reluctance, I once had to simply request my disability be treated as such and accommodated. I think about the quality of life I could have had as a child if I believed the same thing then. I think of all the times I was discriminated against, whether it be not getting invited to sleepovers or making the basketball team or my school deciding it wasn't worth the

trouble to find a real solution to my struggles in gym class, and I wonder how different things would have been if I had known it was discrimination. While my gym teacher and school administration's negligence to accommodate me may seem small and insignificant, when I look back on my life, that's the biggest glaring instance that jumps out at me.

While dealing with one awful gym teacher and not participating in gym for a few years might not have impacted my life greatly at the time, it has led to so many struggles throughout my life moving forward. It completely warped my perception of myself. The reluctance/total unwillingness of my school to recognize, respect, and accommodate my disability led to me feeling so burdensome every time I ever even thought to ask for assistance, patience, or empathy. This mindset has affected everything from my work life to every single hobby I have. I think back on all the times I was treated unfairly at work, whether that be disciplined for latenesses caused by my blood sugars or not getting promotions I absolutely deserved for no reason besides my attendance, and I wonder how different things would have been if I had stood up for myself. I have been treated so unfairly in every workplace I've ever had besides the one I'm at now. I love my job more than nearly anything and a huge part of that is that I am so welcomed and respected and cared for there. I never have to worry about the way I am treated because of my diabetes and I am never afraid to ask for the accommodations I need. I think about the positive impact this has had on me in my adult life, and I legitimately mourn for the childhood and adolescence I could have had if I had been appropriately accommodated as a kid.

Disabilitibetes? Diabetility? Disabetabilitetes? What I'm Saying Here Is They're the Same Damn Thing

I truly understand what people are trying to do with the whole "don't let diabetes stop you!" message. They think it's empowering and comforting. But it's not. Type 1 diabetes is a disability. It's not some inconvenience or simple struggle. It is a majorly disabling disease that affects every single aspect of your existence for every single second of your life. To tell kids that this life is "normal" is so horrifically unfair and results in issues with self-image, confidence, and ability to develop the perspective and bravery it takes to stand up to people who will inevitably discriminate against them. True empowerment does not look like false promises of normalcy or pretending a disability isn't even there until it rears its ugly head. True accommodation is not separating disabled children from their peers entirely or having them sit on the sidelines. In order to properly accommodate, accept, and empower disabled children in a way that will allow them to grow into strong-willed, capable, and successful adults, there needs to be an acknowledgement that disabilities like type 1 diabetes *do* make disabled children different, but that

being different isn't something bad. These children need to hear it from everyone, but especially their educators, that being different doesn't mean you can't be a kid or have a happy, fulfilling life. Being different doesn't mean you have to sit out or muscle through. Your lack of ability to do things other kids can do doesn't mean you have to do nothing at all. People should accommodate you, and in places like schools and workplaces, they have to by law. You should not be afraid to ask for these things and you are not burdensome for doing so.

I think about how much one single "Hey, you're disabled, there are going to be some things you will struggle with or be unable to do. There's nothing wrong with that. We're going to work with you" conversation in my school would have made for me, both on a short- and long-term scale. I think about how differently I would have viewed accommodations as a whole if my school offered me options beyond telling me I didn't have to take gym anymore. I think about all the calls to human resources I should have made throughout my professional life. I think about all the festivals I struggled to keep a stable blood sugar at now that I use accommodations that make my experiences so much easier. I so badly wish this was instilled in me as a child.

My parents, doctors, camp counselors, etc. all played a massive role in me growing up to be the person I am today. Despite the adverse effects of being preached false promises, I still was always respected and supported outside of the classroom/gymnasium. However, I spent most of my childhood within school walls, just like most children. I think about the diabetic kids out there who don't have great parents, doctors, camp counselors, etc. and rely on the adults in their schools to raise and support them. The way disabled children are treated in schools follows them for the rest of their lives and molds them into the disabled adults they become. Accommodating any disability, especially one like type 1 diabetes that affects each person so drastically differently, is not an easy task. It's understandable why someone who has never lived with it doesn't understand what can be done to ease a diabetic child's struggle, but a very simple solution to that is to work *with* the child to see what is best for them. These kinds of conversations/collaborative approaches not only result in appropriate accommodations, but a better sense of confidence and capability moving forward.

Disabled children like myself should not grow up wondering what is wrong with them due to their struggles with what they will someday realize were completely unrealistic expectations. They should not be met with simple band aid-esque solutions when they present their struggles to people and organizations who can (and are obligated to) do something about it. They should be treated, spoken to, and worked with like the human beings, worthy of fair treatment and acceptance, they are. An able-bodied person might not remember a single notable experience they had in their phys ed classes

growing up, but something like that has the potential to shape a disabled child's entire world view—and it does. To truly empower and accommodate those kids living with a disability in schools, there must be honest, open communication about the reality of their lives and an eager willingness to listen to that child when they express what they require to thrive. Anything else is a failure on the school system and disservice to the children that need the exact opposite the most.

8

ACCOUNT OF MY PE EXPERIENCES

Maddy Mau

Personal Experiences in School

I'm Maddy Mau, a rising senior in a public high school. I have no usable vision save for light perception and I use a cane. I use braille to read and write, and I am interested in pursuing a music technology-related career in the future, so I also know braille music. I founded my high school's first ever disability advocacy organization and am part of several other schoolwide organizations including the Climate Team and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) student ambassadors' panel. I enjoy writing/playing music of all styles on piano, violin, guitar, vocals, and digital music software; playing with my cats; and reading science fiction books in my spare time.

I've been enrolled in PE classes alongside my sighted peers since kindergarten. My experiences in PE have largely been unadapted. This means that I had to participate in PE activities designed for sighted students, without any changes that would make them accessible. For instance, in activities involving running from place to place I would always be paired up with a peer rather than being able to navigate independently, and in many sports, I would be relegated to performing one task (i.e., throwing a ball in one direction) rather than being able to participate in the team as the sport was not accessible. Being paired up with a peer for moving around made me feel like a burden to my classmates because my teachers often paired classmates with me at random and I hindered their performance due to the unadapted nature of the activity. Additionally, being relegated to one task in an activity where students ordinarily did multiple things also made me feel unvalued by my teachers because they were not willing to adapt the activity so I could have an equitable experience. Even though I have an IEP (individualized

education plan) stating my accommodations, it did not cover the necessary adaptations and equipment for PE until my junior year of high school (my most recent year of high school as I am writing this). It is frustrating that I did not receive even this level of accommodation until now, and that I still have to fight for the adaptations I need.

Typical Day in PE

My typical day in PE starts with negotiating locker rooms and squads. The lockers in my school are all constructed in the same way and don't have braille numbers or tactile locks, so I need to bring in my own accessible lock and memorize my locker's location rather than just its number, which my classmates do. This can be very difficult when many people are using their lockers at once, leaving me no room to feel for a locker with my lock. Many times, I've had to ask several people to move out of the way repeatedly when searching for my locker. The loud volume of conversation and frequent obstacles on the floor also make locker room navigation very stressful. Even though it's easy for me to become overwhelmed by the crowded and unadapted nature of the locker room, I have to make it through as fast as possible, so I won't be late for warmups.

After everyone is finished in the locker rooms, we head out to squads. Squads are line formations students sit in for attendance and warmups, usually in the middle of the gym floor. The squad locations are only denoted visually (cones and nontactile lines on the floor), and they change often, so I have to rely on other people to find my squad and position therein. Although finding my squad doesn't take a lot of time in the grand scheme of things, similar to the locker room, its unadapted nature is demoralizing and adds to the disproportionate amount of stress I have to endure in class.

Warmups are usually standard (pushups, sit-ups, arm/leg stretches, etc.). However, the descriptions given by the teacher are sometimes vague, so I have to ask them or other students for clarification on how and where to perform the stretches, especially if they involve movement around the room. For instance, if the teacher says "do arm circles," they will not specify the size and/or direction of the circles, and if they say "face that way and do pushups," I don't know which way they want me to face since they never verbalize it. It is sometimes embarrassing when I end up doing the warmups in a way that others are not doing them due to a lack of specific nonvisual instructions. I am also extremely stressed during warmups, especially when being taught by a new teacher, because I have to teach them how to properly adapt warmups by myself from scratch.

After warmups, the main activity of the day is started. Usually, it's a game like volleyball or handball, with occasional units of swimming, square dancing, etc. Although my PE teachers have attempted to adapt these activities,

they had little to no knowledge of how to adapt them. They often asked me to come up with adaptations, which wasn't always effective because I had neither enough experience nor any training on how to adapt every activity they incorporated. For instance, before a volleyball unit last school year my PE teacher asked me something to the effect of "What would be the best way to adapt this unit for you?" On the surface, this seemed like a good question to ask, but it shouldn't be the only question that is asked. I never experienced adapted volleyball, so I had no knowledge of how to adapt it. Additionally, the fact that I was the only person ever asked this type of question about adaptation increased my stress, because my response would always be linked to any accessibility issues in those activities.

For sports like volleyball and tennis, I would usually practice one on one with the teacher for 15–30 minutes and have "free" time for the rest of the period. I haven't participated in games with other students save for serving a couple times in some volleyball games. I feel like my time isn't effectively used when I have so much free time during class (even if I use it to do assignments for other classes), especially since other students are clearly deriving more benefit from PE than what the suboptimal adaptation is allowing me to gain. I've been excused from swimming units throughout high school even though I know how to swim, because my teachers were concerned about my safety in the pool with other students. At the time, I felt relieved that I could avoid the perceived inconvenience of showering and swimming in school, as well as avoiding potential inaccessibility. However, my short-term perceived convenience caused long-term harm, as it reinforced my PE teachers' beliefs that blind students could not function in water. I have participated in dance units, although teachers have not made any effort to accommodate me save for telling my sighted groupmates to make sure I properly learned/participated. In order to participate fully in the dance units, I have to teach my peers how to properly adapt for me. This may be suboptimal for them because they and I were placed in groups randomly and I end up taking a lot of their time and energy. It's also exhausting for me as I have to teach everyone from scratch.

Patterns I've Noticed about Accessibility of PE Experiences

Aside from the lack of adaptation mentioned above, here is a list of other harmful patterns I've noticed in the actions of PE teachers:

1. PE teachers sometimes wrongly assume blind students are incapable of doing things without consulting the students themselves. It does not matter that the thing they assume we cannot do isn't related to our vision. For instance, a previous PE teacher excused me from running and repeatedly stated that I didn't have to/shouldn't run even though I stated

that nothing prevented me from doing so. Not only is this disrespectful and belittling to blind students, but it discourages them from exploring new activities.

2. Sometimes, PE teachers will straight up lie to blind students. During mask mandates, another PE teacher repeatedly removed her face mask around me while claiming she did not remove it. She was also constantly within three feet of me to coach me on dance steps during a square-dancing unit. Not only is lying to blind students morally wrong, but it puts us in danger and reduces our ability to trust teachers with our safety and ensuring an inclusive learning environment.
3. Almost every PE teacher of mine has repeated how “amazing/inspirational” I am for doing any number of ordinarily unremarkable things, from walking to class independently to accessing the Internet to navigating a running track. This sentiment is harmful because it implies that blind students are incapable of performing basic tasks teachers would assume other students can always do. Unfortunately, the “amazing/inspirational” trope, also referred to as “inspiration porn,” does not start/end in PE class. Common sayings like “the only disability in life is a bad attitude,” and media portrayals of disabled people (especially disabled athletes) “overcoming” their disability by doing anything remotely sporty reinforce these stereotypes and directly lead to ableism in the classroom. As a blind student, it is excruciating to be labeled “amazing/inspirational” by the same teachers who devalue my “amazing/inspirational”ness the moment my access needs require that they deviate from their pattern of not adapting or changing their activities. It is also frustrating to be constantly belittled by people whose belief that I am incapable is “confirmed” whenever I do not participate on par with my classmates due to inaccessibility.
4. During unadapted group activities, PE teachers will pair me up with a sighted peer, even when others are not partnered up. This adds stress to my learning because it feels like I am sometimes burdening my classmates and adds stress to my peer because they will have to come up with adaptations for the activity without training.
5. Frequently, PE teachers will ask me how a certain sport/activity should be adapted, even though I told them I did not have experience with all adaptive sports, nor knowledge of how to adapt them in a classroom setting. This puts a disproportionate amount of responsibility on blind students and adds unnecessary stress to their learning.

All these incidents demonstrate a combination of PE teachers lacking awareness of the capabilities/needs of blind students and not respecting our boundaries, as they routinely interact with us in ways that they would never interact with sighted students.

Is PE Made for Me?

After years of experience with PE in a majority-sighted classroom without major adaptations, I do not think PE classes were designed for disabled students like me to succeed. My teachers have no preexisting knowledge of adaptations for blind students and harbor harmful misconceptions about the capabilities of blind students. Every year when I meet a new PE teacher, I have to start from square one of educating them on basic principles, like the fact that blind students should not be touched without their permission and that we are, in fact, capable of motion faster than a slow walk. Since blind students are always implicitly or explicitly considered a “special circumstance,” PE equipment (like lockers, balls, etc.) is not designed for our use. Therefore, adapted equipment is either not present at all or is procured after a convoluted and arduous process, which can at times be more bothersome than making do with the preexisting inaccessible equipment, suboptimal though it may be. Sports equipment specifically designed for blind athletes, like tethers, beepers, etc., is usually not present and even when it is, teachers do not know how to or do not even want to use it because they don’t want to change their procedures. Many PE teachers also end up asking me how to best adapt their classes for my needs, which is well intentioned but very stressful for me as I have to both adapt for an inaccessible learning environment and think at length about how to deal with its inaccessibility using limited resources and expertise.

Personal Experiences Outside of School

My positive, accessible experiences with physical activity have occurred outside of school, in extracurricular activities specifically designed for blind students. For the last 10 years, I’ve attended Camp Abilities Pennsylvania (CAPA), a weekend-long sleep-away camp for blind students to engage in adaptive sports (i.e., running with tethers, blind baseball, futsal, goalball, etc.) with one-on-one coaching. At CAPA, I heard about blind students who had obtained more accessible PE in their schools, with advocacy from CAPA staff. Before attending CAPA, I did not know what accessible PE was like nor how I would advocate for it. More specifically, I did not know anything about obtaining adaptive sports through an IEP. I also had no previous experience with activities and teaching methods designed with blind students in mind, which allowed me to articulate to my PE teachers more clearly how I learned best (i.e., one-on-one hand-over-hand demonstrations, adaptive sports, etc.).

What I Want to Improve in PE

Based on the differences I noticed between my public school’s PE classes and the accessible blind sports education from CAPA, I can think of several ways

9

TOO LOUD AND SITTING OUT

Hollis Jennings

Hollis Jennings: I'm 10 years old and I'm in fourth grade at Emerson Elementary. I like to play outside with my friends. Usually, we just play on the playground.

Editor: So, what kind of stories do you have about your PE class?

Hollis Jennings: There are some bad ones, but there are some good ones. So, one time we were playing, I think it was kickball, and it was my turn to ... No, it was volleyball, and it was my turn to go up and it was my turn to serve the ball. And I served the ball, and I did it good. And then I was towards the back, so I didn't really understand what was going on because I couldn't hear that well. And my friends were trying to tell me. It was really loud though, because everybody was yelling because we were in PE and playing volleyball. It was really loud and my friends were trying to tell me that if the ball came toward me, I had to push it, but I couldn't really hear what they were saying. And then the ball accident! The ball came towards me, and I didn't know what to do because, I don't know, I thought one of my friends was going to [hit] it. But the ball came towards me, and I couldn't hear what they were saying. So, as the ball came towards me, I just dodged out of the way, and it dropped on the floor. And then my friends got mad at me because I didn't understand that I was supposed to grab the ball. The gym was really loud, and my hearing aids were like squeaking, honestly, because it was really, really loud. My hearing aids squeak when something gets too loud.



FIGURE 9.1 Drawing of Hollis not being able to hear her teammate (right) or teacher (blowing her whistle on the left) during physical education.

Mom: You want to talk about the EduMic¹ so he knows what you get in the classroom and maybe not in PE?

Hollis Jennings: I do have this microphone thing, but I don't really use it in PE since it's usually very, very loud. And I don't really need to listen to the PE teacher all that much usually because we're playing a game or we're playing something loud. So, I don't really use it in PE.

Editor: And you're happy that you don't have to use it during PE?

Hollis Jennings: Yeah, because I feel like if I did use it, it would be too loud and it would be too overwhelming.

Editor: Do you have a hard time hearing the PE teacher give instructions?

Hollis Jennings: Not really, because at first when she's giving instructions, it's not loud because we're not in the middle of the game. So, I can hear pretty clearly.

Mom: But your friends, can you hear your friends once the game has started?

Hollis Jennings: No. I can't hear my friends. Because I can't really hear what they're telling me to do. Yeah, they were a little frustrated

- because then we lost a point. Well, we didn't lose a point. The other team got a point. Sometimes it's not as loud though, and sometimes I can hear pretty good.
- Editor:* And how do you feel when you can't hear them and they get upset?
- Hollis Jennings:* Well, I feel kind of frustrated because they're blaming me for something that's not my fault.
- Editor:* Does that happen often in other games or is it just volleyball when that happens?
- Hollis Jennings:* It happens. It doesn't happen a lot, but it happens sometimes. A lot of different games. If it's loud enough, I can't hear what they're saying. I think it's better when we're playing something that doesn't have a ball, which makes all the noise usually because it's loud. Because in basketball, it's bouncing up and down. And in volleyball, people are trying to grab the ball and it's very loud because they're yelling. They're not really yelling instructions, but they're kind of just yelling and it's hard to hear sometimes.
- Editor:* So, you like quieter activities more?
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah.
- Editor:* So, you mentioned that you had both good and bad stories. Can you tell us a good story about PE?
- Hollis Jennings:* Okay. So, one time, I was sitting out with Nora² because I couldn't understand what was happening and she couldn't do the activity very well. I forgot what it was. But we were sitting out and then my friend Tiffany³ came up to us and asked if we wanted to come back since we were all in the same group. She said, "Do you want to come back? I promise we'll make it easier for you guys." So, we came back and then it was easier because they were listening to us, and they were trying to understand how it was. It was easier because they were listening to us. And they were listening to us, and they were trying to understand us, and they were helping it be easier for us because it was like ... Yeah.
- Editor:* What are some other stories from PE that you remember?
- Hollis Jennings:* There was one time when I did bring the microphone, and I asked Ms. Miller, who's our PE teacher, to put it on. When she put it on, she didn't wear it right and it was very loud. She was trying to give instructions, but it was very loud. So, it was helpful because I could hear her give the instructions, but she wasn't wearing it right, and it was kind of not close enough to her mouth. So, I was trying

- to tell her, but I raised my hand, but she didn't call on me because she was too distracted. And I tried to walk up, but then she told me to sit back down. But that was kind of frustrating.
- Editor:* Your PE teacher told you to sit back down when you went up to try to get assistance?
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah.
- Editor:* And this is why you kind of prefer when she doesn't use the microphone?
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah. This was towards the beginning of the year when I actually kind of liked it when she wore the EduMic.
- Editor:* Yeah. Can you tell me a little bit more about Ms. Miller?
- Hollis Jennings:* She's pretty good most of the time. She tries to make it so I can go back to playing the game. She tries to fix my problems and make it so I can go back in, which is really helpful. Yeah, Ms. Miller tries. She's successful a lot of the time, and it's really helpful that she is actually trying.
- Editor:* You mentioned your friend Nora (Booth), who's in your PE class. Do you find yourself hanging out with Nora a lot during class?
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah, definitely. We're really, really good friends and we live pretty close to each other. So, we live pretty close to each other so we kind of are. But we are really good friends. Definitely.
- Editor:* Do you hang out with many other kids during PE, or is it mainly just Nora?
- Hollis Jennings:* It's mainly Nora because usually we're the ones to sit out. We don't really sit out because we have to. It's more because we want to, because it's not easy for us to do the activity. I don't know about Nora, but usually for me, it's mostly just the loudness. And I don't think [Ms. Miller] can really fix how loud the people, how loud my classmates are, because even if she tries to shush them, they're still going to eventually get loud again.
- Editor:* How often do you say that you sit out during PE?
- Hollis Jennings:* So, we have PE once a week, so I sit out maybe once a month. But I usually don't sit out for that long. I just take a break because it's too loud for me to focus. Yeah, there's not really much [Ms. Miller] could probably do because ... I don't know, it would be very hard for her to constantly control everybody.
- Editor:* Do you ever wish that you could be in more specialized setting?

- Hollis Jennings:* No, not really. I like my class because I have a lot of good friends there and I really like my class, but I don't really wish that ... Because with smaller groups, it's kind of just more annoying for some reason. I don't know why, so, yeah. But I don't really wish I could be in a smaller group.
- Editor:* Yeah. What types of activities do you do in PE?
- Hollis Jennings:* We do laps around the gym at the beginning of each class, and we do push-ups and sit-ups and stuff. But I really, really don't like it. It's not because of my hearing loss, it's just because I don't like push-ups and sit-ups and running. But, they're easier to participate in than sports and stuff [because they aren't as loud].
- Editor:* Well then, if you could make up the best day of PE, how would you describe it?
- Hollis Jennings:* I would describe it as we were all going to play a version of tag, like freeze tag or toilet tag, or just regular tag really. I just like more games stuff because it's easier for me to focus because there's not really a goal. There's not really a team that you can let down.
- Editor:* Yeah. If you could tell PE teachers anything to make them able to teach you better, what would you tell them to do?
- Hollis Jennings:* I don't know, just do stuff that is not as loud and not as overwhelming because sometimes people don't acknowledge that it is not going to help me understand you better if you are talking louder ... And try to make it that people aren't yelling constantly because it's really hard for me to hear. And do stuff that's not as overwhelming and loud.

Notes

- 1 An EduMic is a Bluetooth device that connects to my hearing aids and acts as a microphone directly to my ears.
- 2 Nora Booth's name is not anonymized here because she and Hollis Jennings have a shared chapter as well (Chapter 11).
- 3 All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

10

“IT’S NOT REALLY AN ACTIVITY ... THAT’S JUST HAVING A BEACH BALL”

Nora Booth

Nora Booth: I like swimming and reading a lot. Then I also like drawing. Usually at recess I just talk with my friends or read a book if it’s too cold to move around too much. I have a lot of friends. We’re all in the same class. I have lots of different friends in my class who are always are in different groups of different friends. I have my besties who are usually all together and then other girls who are just my friends. But who I’ve still been with since first and second grade.

Editor: Can you tell me a little bit about physical education?

Nora Booth: It isn’t very bad. Sometimes there’s this thing that’s totally not accessible. Sometimes there’s a thing that’s just fun. It depends on the day. I really don’t like Olympic sports because it’s like high jump, long jump, roll this can of milk that gets caught in your wheels, that sort of thing, but sometimes it’s like the “fun run” where you just go in a circle and there are cones, and I can do that pretty well. Also, there’s “Ghosts in the Graveyard,” which is a pretty fun game that we play where you have flashlights and people run and hide and if you get caught by a ghost you change into the ghost and other people have to run their hide from you to a safe zone, that sort of thing. That’s pretty fun. There are a couple of things I really don’t like and a couple of things that are actually pretty fun.

Editor: Can you tell me a little bit about the things that you don’t like first?

Nora Booth: Volleyball for one. Because it's impossible to move a wheelchair but also hit a thing with your hands in a specific position the same time.

Line dancing: I don't know why that's a part of PE and also just dancing in general. It's just usually not very accessible. It's like let's learn to floss. No.

Then one more thing that I don't really like is when we do all those high jumps and stuff. It's like Olympic sports where you do all of this stuff that I completely cannot do. Sometimes she's like, "Okay, you're supposed to do this thing." Where there are different things, but sometimes you have to hit a ball. There's this one thing where you have to spin a rope around your ankle while also jumping over it with the other foot. I'm not supposed to do that.

Mom: What does she do to accommodate you during that [activity]?

Nora Booth: Nothing.

Mom: There's just no option for you?

Nora Booth: Yeah, she's just like, "Sorry, you can watch."

Editor: How do you feel when your PE teacher does those types of things?

Nora Booth: Sad and angry. I just watch, like she says. It's so boring though. Sometimes I think I'm just going to ask whether I can go back to class and do nothing.

Editor: Thank you for sharing that story. I know that was probably really tough to talk about.

Nora Booth: It is, and I usually do every once in a while. When it's bad, I tell mom or dad. But that bad feeling after school, this all happened a while ago.

[I can't do] some specific activities and other just general things like do sit-ups, do push-ups, do deep knee bends. Like here's a warm-up: somebody throws this die and says what the die said. [The PE teacher] has a die with different PE moves for warm-ups. One of them is lunges and another is sit-ups. I can't do sit-ups with the brace on. It's weird and clunky. Then there's another guide that has numbers, just normal numbers, which is like, and whatever number it falls on, that's how many of the thing you have to do. Sometimes I have to wait for just ages not doing anything.

Editor: Are your friends also in this PE class with you?

Nora Booth: Yeah, we can talk to each other during PE. As long as we don't interact with Ms. Miller¹ (the PE teacher). We also listen and are also doing the stuff. Some people who need

help with sit-ups, I'll go and hold onto their feet so that they can hold themselves better. That's the sort of thing. We'll all just do that help each other for different things. Some other people think sit-ups are hard, so I can just hold their feet because they need those flat against the ground to be able to pull up quicker, better.

When there's PE in the classroom (rather than the gym), it's actually not that bad. We can play laser eye where if you wink somebody has to die or something else like that "night in the museum."

Editor: When you say PE in the classroom, what do you mean by that? Is that the PE teacher or the classroom teacher teaching that?

Nora Booth: That's the PE teacher. Just the classroom is smaller, so we can't do as many things that we would do in actual PE. That's like, I don't know if they're doing testing in the gym or there's an assembly in the gym.

Mom: How often is that?

Nora Booth: Once a month. Once a month there's testing sometimes. Well, once every three months, around there. It depends. There's a lot at the start of the year and then a bit in the middle and then a lot at the end.

Editor: PE is different when you're in the gym?

Nora Booth: The [classes] in the gym I usually do with my wheelchair because it's the big, long flat floor. Also, they're usually actually easier to do with the wheelchair. Except for this one where you have to have one foot in a hula-hoop and the other foot out. You have a bowling pin that you have to guard. You throw balls at each other's pins. That game is fun. That one I usually do with my crutches. Just a bit harder because with my crutches I can't really pick up the balls. But with the wheelchair I can pick up the balls, but it's harder for me to go quickly around the bowling pin. In a way it's pretty good but also not too good.

There's the "Grinch's Castle." That's usually near Christmas though. It's like a game where there's a village and there are two Grinches and they take stuff from the village and put it in the castle. Then at the end all the villagers, and they try to tag the villagers where all the other people at the same time. Then at the end, all the people who lived in the village go to the Grinch's castle and steal all the toys. I can usually carry a couple because I'm in the chair, so I have some room. Then also I'm going fast and it's fun.

Editor: You mentioned that sometimes you use your chair and sometimes you use crutches. How do you make that decision for PE?

Nora Booth: Just whatever is easier. A lot of the time I use the chair for the "Grinch's Castle" or the bowling ball thing, but the bowling pin thing or Ghosts in the Graveyard that would be harder. The wheelchair will work for "Ghosts in the Graveyard," it just depends on what I'm feeling like. But for the "Grinch's Castle," I wouldn't be able to carry the stuff in my hands while using crutches as well. I can go faster with the chair.

Editor: Can you tell me about things that you enjoy about PE?

Nora Booth: Well, all my friends are there. Usually there's a time where you can just sit and rest. Sometimes it's actually really fun. "Ghosts in the Graveyard" is actually really fun. Sometimes when everybody's scooting around on little scooters on their butts and I can go with the wheelchair much faster than them, it's fun. When Ms. Miller, the PE teacher, has the parachute and I go under it first and then everybody brings it up and then down. It's a mushroom and we all get under it and hold it down and hide from the teacher. That's fun. Sometimes it's just actually really fun. The "fun run" is making laps around the gym for three whole minutes, which is a really long time, but it's fun. Then at the end we all go together to the drinking fountain. It's more like time to talk. Talk about how hard it was. The fun run is actually pretty fun. Even though you're panting by the end because you can't stop. You can walk a little bit if you've been running, but you can't stop.

Mom: I think when you talked about PE to me before, sometimes when you've talked about activities that you've enjoyed, it's where there's speed and racing and you get out of breath and get that adrenaline rush or endorphin rush of having been doing a fast activity.

Nora Booth: Yeah.

Editor: You like the highly physically active side of the activities?

Nora Booth: I guess so, yeah.

Editor: Do you feel like you can go faster than your classmates?

Nora Booth: Well, some of them. My faster classmates are super-fast. Also, I have the shaky caster, which makes me slower if I want to go faster. But the wheels are better on the slippery floor for one thing. Because if there's a sweets wrapper that somebody from the class before who are second-graders dropped and then somebody slips on it, I'm not going to slip on it. I'm

going to roll over it. Or when they're like on little square scooty things where you have to scoot with your feet. I'm just faster, way faster because they're all just like "I have to scoot with my feet." It's so slow.

Editor: Does that feel pretty good when you're able to lap them during the scooter activities?

Nora Booth: Well, it's just funny to watch them all scooching around being like, "I can't move." Then also be afraid I'm going to roll over their fingers. I don't roll over people's fingers though. I never have. I've rolled over people's toes.

Editor: Would you say, do you like competition in your PE class?

Nora Booth: Well, there's soccer, which is like dribble this ball with your wheel in the way. Then also be moving at the same time. That's sometimes competitive. Yeah, there's a couple different things. There's the thing where, yeah, some things are competitive like ball sports, other things are not.

Mom: You think sometimes you guys like to create competition among each other, even if that's not specifically the point of the activity? You enjoy racing with your friends or being faster when you can.

Nora Booth: Yeah, I like when it's that game with the bowling pins and the hula-hoops, then you have to try and knock over somebody else's pin.

Editor: Do you like the competition in PE then?

Nora Booth: Sometimes.

Mom: Well, she likes it when it's a level playing field and when she can compete, sometimes it's competitive.

Nora Booth: Yeah, if it's volleyball, I'm just like, "oh, goodbye."

Editor: In certain activities you don't like the competition just because it's not accessible for you, is that right?

Nora Booth: Sometimes. Yeah. Also, there's not really a lot of competition. For the "fun run," I was talking about competition. I just meant just between different classes in the school.

Editor: Switching gears a bit, how would you say that your classmates interact with you during physical education?

Nora Booth: They interact with me like just the same as they interact with me during the school day. They talk when they can. People want to be in a square near somebody else's because there's like squares on the PE floor for personal bubbles. Sometimes Ms. Miller puts scotch tape to make them clear. Otherwise, it's white lines. I scramble to be in a square near one of my best friends.

Last year twice, the boys were sitting on the stairs, a couple boys were sitting on the stairs and I charged at the far wall, made a turn just so that I was building up my speed, charged toward them and turned at the last second. But they were all screeching and putting their feet up on the stairs. I scared them. I didn't actually hit them, but I did scare them.

Editor: If you could design what the perfect PE class would be, how would you explain it?

Nora Booth: Well, maybe instead of there being stairs at the front of the class we're sitting on, well there could be stairs. Stairs are fine, just little carpeted stairs. But maybe there could be a gap to put the wheelchair in because otherwise it's just parked in front of the stairs. Once we were running three laps and Ms. Miller moved the chair. She was like, so that we could run the three laps. I can't run three laps if I'm not in the chair.

Mom: She can't move your chair. That sounds like we have to have a meeting. You've had different PE teachers in the past. Ms. Miller's been teaching only the past two years. Is that right?

Nora Booth: Mm-hmm.

Editor: What other things would make PE perfect for you?

Nora Booth: There could be more—less, spin this thing around your ankle while also jumping over with the other foot sort of thing. We could do build a house out of hula-hoops and then decorate it in 10 minutes, then decorate it with these streamers in five minutes ... That would be pretty fun.

Maybe no volleyball. I really don't like volleyball. It's really hard to move the wheel to roll while doing this [mimes hitting a volleyball] with your hands. Oh no, I have to turn this way! No, I missed a lot.

I don't know. Maybe not do warmups. If you do do warmups, you should make them accessible ... Those aren't even the worst part, but still, I just have to wait until everybody is done doing sit-ups and then deep knee lunges and be on the wall and then lean down and then lean up again and then kick your leg out to a weird way.

If there was something I couldn't do, like that thing where you jump and a spin at the same time, I wish Ms. Miller would make it so that there was something I could do at the same time. Right now, she's just like, "Just watch."

Mom: Would you like it if some friends also had that? If you maybe did a rotation and some of the friends did one activity and the others did something that you could do at the same time and

then maybe they would trade and you could keep doing the same one that you could do.

Nora Booth: But mom, sometimes there is that. But that one activity gets boring after an entire PE class.

Editor: Does your teacher ever let you choose what you want to do if you can't do one of the activities?

Nora Booth: Sometimes she's just like, "Do you want to play with this beach ball while everybody else is dribbling in soccer?" But no, why would I want to play with a beach ball? That's not fun unless you have two people. One throwing, one hitting and catching, that sort of thing.

Editor: Do you like when Ms. Miller picks the activities for you, or would you prefer to make your own activities?

Nora Booth: My own activities would be sort of fun.

Editor: If you had a partner or two to maybe do that with?

Nora Booth: Yeah, maybe. Because just one person that isn't doing anything really.

Mom: If you're doing it by yourself, that's not fun?

Nora Booth: It's like you're not doing it.

Mom: What would you maybe pick if you had the opportunity to choose the activity and a friend to do it with you and a couple of friends?

Nora Booth: I don't know. Because usually what everybody else was doing would be taking up most of the gyms. We would do it in a corner or something. It couldn't be anything like going around on scooters.

Editor: When your PE teacher does give you a beach ball or a balloon on the side and everyone else is doing soccer, does that make you feel sad because you're doing a completely different activity than what the rest of the class is doing?

Nora Booth: Yeah. Also, it's not really an activity. It's mostly just throw this beach ball and then go get it and then throw it again. That's just having a beach ball.

Mom: Do you feel like your friends are noticing that you're bored and excluded when that happens? Are they aware or are they paying attention?

Nora Booth: Some, but mostly they're just doing the activity. Ms. Miller's like, "We got to do this thing." They're on the steps feeling bored and excluded themselves a lot of the time. We just talk like that. Hollis² goes on the steps because Ms. Miller is shouting all the orders of volleyball like, "Run and do this." Then everybody else is also shouting and [Hollis] just gets

confused with all the noise. Then sometimes she comes and we just talk on the steps.

Editor: How often do you think you end up just talking during PE class with your classmates while an activity that's not working for you is going on?

Nora Booth: Only sometimes. Also, I haven't been to PE class because of therapy.

Mom: Yeah, we've had a couple of weeks off for other appointments. I've tried to find them so that she is able to miss PE because that's the least favorite part of the week.

Editor: Nora, you like when you have an excuse to get out of PE class?

Nora Booth: Yeah, it's much better than if it was a scheduling conflict with music or art. Because art only happens once a month and music is my second favorite. But recorder is pretty interesting.

Editor: If you could give some advice to PE teachers like Ms. Miller, what advice would you give to make sure that students like you have a better PE experience?

Nora Booth: Don't be rude. Because once Ms. Miller, actually this was last year, but she was like, "Is your leg ever getting better? Is your leg going to get better soon?" I totally ignored her question. It was annoying. I felt annoyed. Then I went out the door because that was the end of class. She just asked me at the end and then we went away. I didn't answer her because I was not going to answer her question. I think that she knew the answer. I told her when she first came to be a PE teacher that my feet weren't, like, broken or anything.

Notes

- 1 All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.
- 2 Hollis Jennings' name is not anonymized here because she and Nora Booth have a shared chapter as well (Chapter 11)

A PHYSICAL EDUCATION STORY ABOUT BEST FRIENDS

Hollis Jennings and Nora Booth

- Editor:* So, we are here with Ms. Hollis and Ms. Nora, and we're going to have a group conversation about their experiences in PE. First off, you have the same PE teacher, right?
- Nora Booth:* Yeah.
- Hollis Jennings:* Yep. Ms. Miller.¹ We're in the same class once a week on Thursdays ... the whole school has the same PE teacher.
- Nora Booth:* We also have music on Thursdays, that's irrelevant though.
- Editor:* What's better? PE or music?
- Nora Booth:* Music.
- Hollis Jennings:* Music.
- Editor:* Oh, you both said that pretty quickly. Why would you say that you don't like PE as much as music?
- Hollis Jennings:* Well, it's kind of just harder.
- Nora Booth:* For one thing, mostly music is fun.
- Hollis Jennings:* And PE isn't very fun because it's harder to do everything.
- Nora Booth:* Yeah. Sometimes PE is fun. Other times it's just boring.
- Hollis Jennings:* I like it better when we play games.
- Nora Booth:* Also, I don't like the PE teacher, Ms. Miller.
- Editor:* Why not?
- Hollis Jennings:* Sometimes she, I don't know, it's just kind of annoying. She says, "Jump the rope."
- Nora Booth:* For me it's not that, for me, it's just like, "All right, everybody is going to do this thing." Where you hold the thing around your foot and then you jump, but at the same time spinning the thing around your foot. But then she's

- just like, “all right. And you can just watch.” Why would I want a watch? Why don’t you make something that I can do? Or just let me do a different thing instead of just having everybody do a thing and me just be doing nothing.
- Hollis Jennings:* Just maybe not do that activity. Or anything accessible really. Yeah. Usually when we do something that Nora can’t do, she just, you’ll see she just kind of wheels around and—
- Nora Booth:* Being bored.
- Hollis Jennings:* She wheels around and she talks to people when she’s bored.
- Editor:* What do you do when Nora kind of just wheels around being bored?
- Hollis Jennings:* I talk to her when she comes by me. We kind of talk while I’m doing the activity.
- Nora Booth:* Yes. Yeah, or trying to do the activity. PE Activities are hard in general for everybody. But I have a bunch of friends in my whole class. And if somebody needs help, I can find a way to help them. Sit-ups are hard for some people. Well, I can hold your feet. [Sit-ups are hard for me] because my brace doesn’t bend even that far, see?
- Editor:* So, I can see you drawing a picture of PE, right now Hollis. Is that Nora (referring to drawing)?
- Hollis Jennings:* Yes, Nora’s sitting on the edge.
- Editor:* So, Nora, you’re adding spokes to the wheels now, huh?
- Nora Booth:* Yeah. They need spokes. They’re wheels.
- Editor:* And so, Hollis. Who are all these folks that you’re drawing?
- Hollis Jennings:* Those are my classmates.
- Nora Booth:* Oh, this is volleyball. Volleyball is annoying.
- Hollis Jennings:* So, Nora usually sits out on volleyball. [The drawing] is including me not hearing what they’re saying. Like that story I told you.
- Editor:* Yeah, so why is Nora over here on the side (referring to drawing)?
- Hollis Jennings:* Because she wasn’t—
- Nora Booth:* Because I can’t move the wheelchair and also hit the volleyball in a specific way with my hands and specific moves—
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah, she wasn’t playing. She couldn’t play. (Referring their drawing) But these are our friends, so I drew them good.
- Editor:* Oh, those are your friends. So, you drew your friends good. Where are their mouths?
- Nora Booth:* (Laughing) They don’t have any!



FIGURE 11.1 Drawing of Hollis and Nora B. with their peers and teacher during a volleyball game in physical education.

- Editor:* So, what kind of mouths did you give them, Hollis?
- Hollis Jennings:* Smiley mouths.
- Editor:* Why are they smiley?
- Hollis Jennings:* Because they're nice.
- Editor:* Oh, they're nice. Are they also having fun in PE?
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah.
- Nora Booth:* I guess so.
- Hollis Jennings:* Because they can understand and kind of do it better.
- Nora Booth:* Volleyball is just confusing.
- Editor:* And so that's why they're happy because they can do it better?
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah.
- Nora Booth:* But also, volleyball is pretty confusing for everybody.
- Editor:* So, you're drawing all your friends—
- Nora Booth:* Yeah, those are the boys. So, they don't deserve to—
- Hollis Jennings:* Oh wait, let me draw Nicolas.
- Hollis Jennings:* Oh yeah, Nicolas. Make him super tall (laughing).
- Editor:* And so, these are kids that are—

- Hollis Jennings:** In our class. And so, then I'm going to draw the other team now.
- Editor:** Okay. (Referring to the drawing) And that's the volleyball flying over?
- Hollis Jennings:** I don't know what a volleyball looks like. I forgot.
- Nora Booth:** This is a volleyball and then it's got purple polka dots. It's a volleyball.
- Editor:** Does it really have purple polka dots or is this some creative liberties that we're taking?
- Hollis Jennings:** This is some creative liberties.
- Nora Booth:** No, it's actually just purple in general.
- Hollis Jennings:** So, we're going to have to say, "by Hollis."
- Nora Booth:** "By Hollis And Nora."
- Editor:** Dual credit for the drawing.
- Hollis Jennings:** This is me (referring to the drawing²). And I'm frowning because I don't understand. Because I can't hear anything. But I need to draw my hearing aids. Mine are pink.
- Editor:** When you draw pictures of yourself, do you always draw your hearing aids?
- Hollis Jennings:** No, but I thought it was important for this one so I could stand out from the other people. Because I don't really, when I draw myself, you can't really see my hearing aids.
- Nora Booth:** Sort of like if you just stand in front, your hair is slightly covering them.
- Hollis Jennings:** Who else should I draw?
- Editor:** Do you want to draw your PE teacher?
- Nora Booth:** No.
- Hollis Jennings:** Oh yeah, I'll draw her in the background.
- Nora Booth:** Nooo.
- Hollis Jennings:** Because she was blowing her whistle.
- Editor:** Nora, you don't want your PE teacher to be drawn on there?
- Nora Booth:** No. She's mean.
- Hollis Jennings:** That's Ms. Miller. It's a little whistle.
- Editor:** Oh, what's this right up here on the top of her forehead?
- Nora Booth:** Her frowny eyebrows.
- Editor:** Hollis gave her frowny eyebrows?
- Nora Booth:** (Laughing) Yeah. Because she's always frowning at us because volleyball is so confusing for everybody. They're just throwing the ball at a thing and they're throwing it the other day ...
- Hollis Jennings:** Beep! That's the whistle.

- Nora Booth:* ... Somebody getting hit in the head.
- Hollis Jennings:* I don't know why I drew her blowing her whistle. Maybe just because she does it a lot. I don't know.
- Editor:* Is that something that is hard for you with your hearing aids?
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah. It sounds like squeaking. And I'm going to draw the stairs.
- Editor:* Does it ever cause you to take your hearing aids out?
- Hollis Jennings:* No, because I'm not allowed at school, because I might lose them. No, I just turn the volume down.
- Nora Booth:* Yeah, you have left them at places before.
- Editor:* Does that help when you do that?
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah. I'm drawing the stage. Because it's also the auditorium. I don't know why the stage is open, but it is. These are the steps.
- Editor:* So, this drawing is sort of like a collaboration between both Hollis and Nora?
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah.
- Editor:* So, on this side of the volleyball net, no one has faces. Who are all those?
- Hollis Jennings:* Oh wait, no, I just didn't get to them yet.
- Nora Booth:* (In the drawing) I'm sort of in the corner sometimes and then I watch and then sometimes if the ball gets thrown towards me, I hit it back then. Because if I get my wheelchair over there, I won't have enough time to hit it in the correct way.
- Hollis Jennings:* [My classmate³] is frowning, because he wants me to get the ball, but I can't hear him. I can't understand.
- Editor:* Are there any other kids in your class who also need additional help?
- Hollis Jennings:* No.
- Nora Booth:* Not really.
- Editor:* How does it make you feel that you both need more help than some of your classmates?
- Nora Booth:* I don't know. Well, actually it's sort of nice that there's two people in the classroom instead of just one.
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah. But when you're gone ...
- Editor:* Yeah, what is it like when one of you is gone from PE class?
- Hollis Jennings:* I'm just sad because Nora's not there and Nora's my best friend, so ...
- Nora Booth:* Yeah. Also, whenever anybody's sick or just doesn't come for one day, then everybody's like, "They're dead." (Ringing the bell on her wheelchair) That was my bike bell.

- Editor:* Your bike bell?
- Hollis Jennings:* She has a bike bell because people always get in the way, but she never rings it.
- Editor:* Do you ring it in PE class ever, Nora?
- Nora Booth:* No. It's too loud.
- Hollis Jennings:* And she got it just recently.
- Editor:* Does it make everyone look at you?
- Nora Booth:* Yeah.
- Hollis Jennings:* It just makes everyone move.
- Nora Booth:* Actually, it does make everybody look at me and then they're like, "oh, I am supposed to move?"
- Editor:* Do they move?
- Nora Booth:* Yeah, most of the time.
- Editor:* In this drawing, who do you think has the most fun in PE class?
- Nora Booth:* The sport boys.
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah, because they really like sports. Blech.
- Editor:* Blech?
- Hollis Jennings:* That's the "blech" thing to be.
- Editor:* Being sports boys is the "blech" thing to be?
- Hollis Jennings:* Yeah, it's very blech. Because boys are blech. And sports are blech. And then sport boys are blech.
- Nora Booth:* Blech.
- Editor:* So, you don't like sports?
- Hollis Jennings:* Nope. (Laughing)
- Nora Booth:* And also, boys, they're blech.
- Editor:* On the other side, who do you think has the least amount of fun and why?
- Hollis Jennings:* Nora.
- Nora Booth:* Actually, it's pretty fun to just watch people get a ball thrown at them and then go, ugh.
- Editor:* Would you like to both sign this drawing? Because you both worked on it? In the corner? That way when we put it in the book, you can have your autograph on it. Kind of like artists. Artists do that, I think? I'm not an artist. I don't know.
- Nora Booth:* They do.
- Editor:* Do you have anything else you want to tell us about PE before we finish our chat?
- Hollis Jennings:* I don't like it.
- Nora Booth:* PE's boring and annoying. Except for sometimes it's fun.
- Hollis Jennings:* And "Ghosts in the Graveyard."
- Nora Booth:* Yeah. "Ghosts in the Graveyard" is super fun.

Hollis Jennings: “Ghosts in the Graveyard” was the only time I’ve ever had a lot of fun at PE.

Editor: So why do you like that game so much?

Nora Booth: Because it’s really fun.

Hollis Jennings: And it’s easier for me to understand.

Nora Booth: Yeah, because it’s got five rules and then everybody’s yelling things, but you don’t really have to understand what they’re yelling.

Editor: And so, it makes it easy for you, Hollis?

Hollis Jennings: Yeah.

Nora Booth: I’m really fast in my wheelchair. I can be if I want to.

Notes

- 1 All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.
- 2 Hollis is the girl saying “What?” in Figure 11.1.
- 3 This classmate is saying, “Get the ball” to Hollis in Figure 11.1.

12

THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE EYES OF A TEACHER WITH A DISABILITY

Chris Ahrens

I have not given much thought to the fact that I am a person with a disability who sought out a career in physical education and how uncommon that may be. I have wanted to be an adapted physical education teacher since my early high school years. As I sit here and reflect on how that came to be, I am left realizing that it is because I had positive experiences in physical education thanks to teachers who were willing to meet me where I was and not with unrealistic expectations compared to my peers.

As I reflect on these experiences, one theme continues to stand out, I was never made to feel as though I could not participate in an activity. I do have some memories of students staring or asking why I got to do something differently, but I do not remember feeling ostracized by my classmates for the teacher having to accommodate me, in physical education anyways, I'll have to write another chapter on my social experiences as a person with a disability. I am hopeful that the experiences shared throughout this chapter will provide perspective on the significant role that teachers play in providing students with a positive experience. I have clear memories from early elementary school through to my college years.

The Elementary Experience

My earliest memories of physical education are from elementary school. I have clear memories of always having an eagerness to go to class. I can distinctly remember the cafeteria that doubled as a gymnasium and all the fun of learning locomotor patterns, playing tag, and just enjoying play. It is this foundation that set the course for me to have a positive relationship with physical activity.

My earliest memories of requiring support or adaptations in physical education start around 3rd or 4th grade. Every year we did a gymnastics unit that included balance beams, a vault, and body weight exercises. Balance, coordination, and body strength difficulties are all associated with my diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy, so, naturally, this was a difficult unit for me. When walking on the balance beam the teacher was right there allowing me to hold their hand, when trying to learn a cartwheel (which I never fully mastered) they provided the skill broken down into steps that allowed me to put my hands on the ground and to move one foot at a time in a horizontal plane so that I could progress and move my body in a variety of ways that allowed for increased coordination and strength. Lastly, when at the vault I did not possess the coordination nor the strength to bounce off the springboard and land on my knees, come to a standing position, and jump off. I remember my teacher telling me “Don’t worry, I’m going to help you,” and the immediate sense of ease I felt, knowing I was going to be able to perform this activity. Just like my peers, I started my run from about 30’ away and when I got to the springboard my teacher guided me up onto the vault and helped me come to my feet where I was then able to jump off.

There are a few moments during my elementary years that really stand out. Growing up in upstate New York, we were lucky that each school district usually had a pool that could be used for a swim unit. We were bused from our elementary school to the high school where we would get in the pool for the day’s lesson. In my 3rd grade year, we were divided into three groups, most of which were testing into the intermediate or middle group. I do not recall exactly what the test was, but I remember being the only swimmer in the beginner group and having to stay in the shallow end. It was not that I did not know how to swim, I looked like I was drowning as I swam as my right arm had and still must do most of the work. Being placed in the beginner group was hard for me socially as I was embarrassed to be the only one, but my teacher did a nice job of explaining that he just wanted to make sure that I was safe before I moved on to the next group and that I will get the chance to join my classmates in a different group. After a few classes of making sure I could float on my back and could stay afloat, I advanced to the intermediate group. I could not have felt better as I was able to join my classmates in the deep end of the pool and participate in the same activities as them.

Another standout moment from my younger years occurred during a volleyball unit, when we were being taught the underhand serve. As we were practicing the serve, I was unable to hold the ball in the palm of my left hand and strike the ball up and over a net. As I have done throughout much of my life, I tried to produce a solution on my own, but I just could not get it down and I grew frustrated and embarrassed. My teacher came up to me and again gave me a reassuring talk that this was not a big deal and proceeded to work with me to see if bouncing the ball first and striking it with an underhand

motion would be more effective. It turned out to be a great modification as I consistently served the ball over the net to the other side. Instantaneously my feelings of anxiety and inadequacy were replaced with a sense of pride at my success. I still smile thinking about the positive impact this had on me all from a teacher who was willing to think a little outside the box and bring the activity to my level.

The Secondary Experience

As I grew older, I became a more efficient and competent gross motor mover. I had played a variety of sports through the years and with understanding the tactical concepts came the ability to meaningfully participate in physical education. While team sports, individual activities, and dual sports were easily accessible there were a few areas that continued to present difficulties participating fully, most notably fitness testing and swimming. Growing up in the 1990s, the Presidents Physical Fitness Test was the preferred test for assessing students' physical fitness levels. The test consisted of push-ups, pull-ups, curl-ups, a shuttle run, a 1-mile run, and the sit and reach test. At a quick glance, one can recognize they are assessing flexibility, upper body strength, abdominal strength, cardiovascular fitness, and quickness (the shuttle run). The standards in the test represented the 50th percentile for same age peers across the country. In my experience, for the sake of ease and time commitment, teachers will test students in a large group and others will wait while their peer performs curl-ups, pull-ups, etc. ... For me, the runs and the curl-ups were fine, but my disability is the most pronounced in my left arm and thus makes the upper body strength components more difficult for me. My teacher at the time could be classified as old school or no nonsense, as many teachers were back then. I recall approaching him filled with anxiety and nerves to explain my concerns and fears about certain subtests. It was not my fear of not being able to perform the test or meet the standard, but it was centered around the fear of looking silly in front of my peers, a theme I think many people, both young and old, can relate to. Despite building up the worst possible solution in my head, my teacher responded kindly that they understood, and I could attempt the tests with them privately. While my results in these areas were not at the standard, the fact that I did not have to perform them in front of my peers which for me felt like it drew the attention to my disability made my experience through my secondary physical education more enjoyable.

As mentioned earlier, swimming was a difficult unit for me, and this theme carried all the way through college as there were swimming requirements that were needed to earn my degree in physical education. This specific memory comes from middle school. I was a slow swimmer and as we would swim the width of the pool repetitively, I would finish near the back and by the time

I could get myself out of the pool and on the edge, it would be time to go again. This was embarrassing as I would struggle to climb out of the pool as the strong and faster swimmers were still finishing. We were in the deep and spread ourselves out from the end of the pool to the halfway point. The strongest swimmers and what felt like the popular kids wanted to be in the deepest part of the pool which was by the wall and right where the ladder was in the corner. As I am recalling the situation I either struggled to climb out of the pool, would stay in the water but would be in the way or would swim past everyone to use the ladder, all of which drew attention to me in some capacity. This was not a great feeling for a kiddo who already feels like they stand out.

I share this example as it highlights that with some intentional planning everyone could have been accommodated. Instead of leaving the placement in the pool as self-selected, the teacher could have assigned spots or guided the stronger swimmers to be in positions away from the ladder. I doubt I was the only student that would have benefited from accessing the ladder or where they were positioned on the wall. I by no means think the teacher was trying to facilitate an environment where a student or students felt as an outsider, but I do think and would encourage teachers reading this that with some reflection, my experience and others with similar experiences could be avoided or minimized, simply by how one structures their environment.

Not all my swimming experiences were negative through school. In the same middle school physical education class that I had referenced above there was a moment when the teacher clearly went out of their way to work with me so that I could grasp a skill. We were working on surface dives from the edge of the pool, and I was struggling with the multiple stages of coordination involved that required me to push off with my legs and to control my body as it went into the water ... I kept belly flopping. My teacher could see the frustration and asked me to stay after where he broke the skill down into parts and worked with me until I had it. After correctly entering the water with my hands and then my head, I came to the surface with a massive smile on my face. It was a moment where the frustration subsided, and I felt successful. The teacher did not need to work with me but did and here I am as an adult and reflecting on this experience fondly, and presumably it is a happier memory as compared to one that is not.

The College Experience

The need for considerations to my experience with physical activity and physical education continued into college. As a physical education major in college at SUNY Brockport, activity classes were part of our curriculum and there were fitness requirements that one had to pass to graduate. A physical education major needed to run the mile in a certain time, leg press, bench

press, and there was a curl-up requirement as well. Going into this class, all the feelings of anxiety about performance from my prior experiences bubbled back up. The class was structured with certain days in the classroom and other days on the track and in the weight room. The only ones that were of concern to me were the tests for upper body strength. My left side is weaker from head to toe, but my CP impacts my left arm/hand the most and in addition that arm is noticeably short and thus traditional lifts like the bench press are more difficult for me. I let the teacher at the beginning of the semester know about my disability as it is good practice as I was going to be exerting myself in their presence, but I had not broached the subject that I was concerned about portions of the physical fitness test. As the semester continued, I got the courage to approach the teacher to discuss the fitness standards and once again I was met with an understanding and acceptance, and we discussed which portions I thought I could access and those would be the ones I would be scored on. I passed the fitness test portions that I could access and was on my way to a degree. In my head I had built it up that I may not get my degree. However, upon reflection, I don't think that was ever a possibility but there's a good lesson in here that when you are unable to fully access a test or curriculum and those standards that your peers who can fully access are being held to are front and center for you, it can be overwhelming.

The most difficult physical education experience at any level was by far and away my swimming activity class at SUNY Brockport (a common theme throughout my life!). This class was a graduation requirement and there was no getting around it. This class was at 8:00 a.m., two times a week and involved the introduction of strokes with instruction and then swimming hundreds of yards for the remainder of the class. As reflected upon throughout this chapter, swimming has never been a strength of mine and this class presented a new challenge of swimming distances I never had before. The final assessment in the class required me to swim 500 yards in a certain amount of time (I cannot remember the time for the life of me!). I dreaded waking up for this class every Tuesday and Thursday as it was a physical struggle for me to swim the required distances. To be clear, I was not in danger of drowning but the motor planning component to swimming is not an intuitive motor movement for me, when I focus on my arms, I stop kicking and vice versa when I focus on my kicking.

The part of the class that sticks out the most as I reflect back is the rest of the class having to wait for me as I was the last person to finish. It brought back all the memories of middle and high school and having all of the eyes on me. If you were to ask me what I'd do differently, the obvious response might be to have me swim a shorter distance or assess my knowledge of the strokes, but I think I'd start by putting on my teacher hat and think about making the class more accessible across the board as swimming is a skill that is difficult for many people. I'd start by providing the work in such a way

that has the students start and finish at different times. That would allow for less advanced swimmers to not have the spotlight on them. It would lead to a better experience for myself, the person with the disability if the class was structured in such a way that I would not feel as though I was getting preferential treatment. From my experience, no one wants to feel as though they are getting a free ride and would instead prefer to be benchmarked in a way they feel is equitable to that of their peers. While, I have provided this example as it relates to a swimming class, I think it is an important mindset for teachers to take on. Instead of offering similar activities for only the person with a disability, can we begin to structure environments that are an authentic learning environment for everyone involved? Does the individual in the sitting wheelchair have to play sitting volleyball or could it be a sitting volleyball unit for the entire class to play? These are the questions that are top of mind for me as I reflect back on this swimming experience and all of the examples we've discussed in this chapter.

Reflection

Writing this chapter has been an interesting process for me, I have never reflected on my experiences in physical education as a person with a disability. I have never made the connection that my experiences may have led to why I am in the field. As I reflect on my life to this point as a person with a disability, I have been both intentionally and unintentionally the target of discrimination. I have often felt as an outsider in our society, that I do not fit. That is quite difficult for me to process as my disability is minor and I am left thinking about others with disabilities who require more support than I must feel. With all of this said, the physical education environment was not one that I typically felt marginalized in and that was because there were teachers along the way that were willing to be accepting and think outside the box. There were of course areas for those teachers to improve, the lesson structures and content may not align with what we consider best practices today but for me they made the experience enjoyable. The main theme that I keep coming back to as I reflect is *that we can create environments where the person with the disability or unique need does not need to feel increased levels of anxiety when advocating for themselves*. Within each example above there was an individual who had to summon the courage to speak to their teacher so their needs could be met. Each time the teacher responded kindly and accommodated but unfortunately, we have lived experiences in a society where it is implied that we are less and not at the standard of others. It is often subtle, not intentional, but because of this, I was scared to make even the simplest requests and had to coach myself up every time I needed to advocate for myself. As we structure physical education environments, let us keep all our students in mind.

13

AN INTERVIEW ABOUT PE WITH CARSON JONES

Carson Jones

Editor: What is your name?

Carson Jones: My name is Carson Jones.

Editor: Where do you live?

Carson Jones: I live in Onalaska, WI. Onalaska is located next to Lake Onalaska on one side and bluffs on the other. The population of Onalaska is about 18,000. We are 5 miles from La Crosse, WI. My grandma has a cabin in Ojibwa where we ride UTV's and snowmobiles.

Editor: Who do you live with in Onalaska?

Carson Jones: I live with my parents, Christopher and Christine, my older sister Makenzie, my younger sister Morgan, Makenzie's dog, Yellie and our dog, Tucker.

Editor: Where do you go to school?

Carson Jones: Onalaska High School, I am a Junior.

Editor: Do you remember when you were diagnosed with Autism?

Carson Jones: I don't, but my parents tell me I was three and a half years old.

Editor: In general, what can you tell us about your experiences with schools in Onalaska?

Carson Jones: Schools in Onalaska have been good. I have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which is a written statement for a student with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by a team, including the student's family, that outlines an educational plan for the student. I have had an IEP since I started preschool, and the district has always worked with me and my parents to make sure my needs are met, and I am successful.

Editor: More specifically, what can you tell us about your PE experiences?

Carson Jones: Overall, I feel it was a good experience. I liked my teachers; they made sure I was involved and didn't make it obvious that I was different than some of my peers.

Editor: How did they make sure you were involved?

Carson Jones: Teachers never pointed out that I was different than some of my peers, that is very important to me. I do not want attention drawn to my disability, I want to be treated the same as everyone else.

Editor: What is your earliest memory of PE?

Carson Jones: I remember Ms. Swiggum, she was my PE teacher in grade school. She liked music so she would play it often and we danced and ran around. I remember playing tag, ghosts in the graveyard, kickball, soccer and baseball. I preferred playing outside when weather permitted but we had a large gym to play in when we were unable to go outdoors. My mom has told me that when I was in kindergarten, she received an email from my PE teacher that was not positive. She shared, I did not sit during class or pay attention and I needed to work on my attention span. My mom typed a response but thankfully didn't send it, it also was not positive. Mom met with my teacher, and they discussed strategies to help me focus.

Editor: Can you tell me a story describing your favorite day ever in PE?

Carson Jones: My sophomore year of high school, we went bowling at Coulee Golf and Bowl in the afternoon. I bowled a 160, which was great for me. I bowled better than some of my friends, one of them did better. I am pretty competitive, so I enjoyed beating most of them. It was nice to be out of school. I ate chicken strips (my favorite) and soda.

Editor: Why was this day your favorite day? How did you feel that day?

Carson Jones: Being out of school. I felt good, it was fun, and the teachers and students all enjoyed it.

Editor: Can you tell me a story describing your least favorite day ever in PE?

Carson Jones: The day we were scheduled to ride bikes. I woke up and told my mom I was sick to try to get out of going to school. She took my temperature, I didn't have one. She asked me more questions and I finally told her why I didn't want to go to school. She called my principal and PE teacher, Mr. Vieaux.

They came up with a plan to call me to the office right before PE was supposed to start, I missed the beginning of the ride, so I was able to stay with the other class that was doing yard games.

Editor: Why was this day your least favorite? How did you feel that day?

Carson Jones: I am unable to ride a bike, I was worried everyone would find out and tease me. No one found out and until now, no one other than family members know that I can't ride a bike. I was able to play field games with the other PE class.

Editor: What was your favorite thing to do in PE?

Carson Jones: I enjoyed soccer. I am pretty accurate at kicking and enjoy being outdoors. I like that we play 35 minutes, and the entire "season" is just a week or two and then we switch to a new sport. I am not a sports guy, so I prefer the shorter time.

Editor: What was your favorite thing about Ms. Swiggum?

Carson Jones: She made sure everyone in our class was able to participate. She made sure everyone enjoyed it and made adaptations for everyone.

Editor: Can you tell me about your relationship with Ms. Swiggum?

Carson Jones: She was nice to me, she used to live in our neighborhood, and she remembers me.

Editor: What is your favorite memory with your classmates during elementary school PE?

Carson Jones: I enjoyed the parachute, we would work together to lift it up, sit under it, bounce balls on it, run under it with music playing. I like that everyone is included; we need everyone to do their part to make it fun for all of us.

Editor: What about middle school, who was your PE teacher?

Carson Jones: Mr. Vieaux

Editor: What was your favorite memory of Mr. Vieaux?

Carson Jones: He would make sure everyone was included. Like I mentioned before, in 8th grade, I woke up and told my parents I was sick when I wasn't. We were supposed to ride bikes that day and I can't. My parents called school and spoke to our principal, they called me to the office while everyone left for the ride, they had me join the other class and participate with them. Mr. Vieaux never brought it up after that, if there was a bike ride, he just talked to me and switched me to the other class for that day.

Editor: Can you tell more about this day?

Carson Jones: I am unable to ride a bike, I was worried everyone would find out and tease me. No one found out and until now, no

one other than family members know that I can't ride a bike. I was able to play field games with the other PE class.

Editor: How was your relationship with Mr. Vieaux? Anything you liked most or disliked most about your relationship?

Carson Jones: He joked with me about my older sister, who also had Mr. Vieaux in middle school. He made PE fun; he would laugh and talk with all the students.

Editor: Can you tell me what a typical day looked like in middle school PE?

Carson Jones: We arrived, changed into PE clothes, then we would play basketball, baseball, football, volleyball, tennis, field hockey and when class was over, we changed back into our regular clothes. Everyone participates and takes their turn; we are encouraged to cheer for all of our teammates. We play the sport for a couple weeks and then move onto the next sport, it makes it more enjoyable because we don't do it long enough to get sick of it.

Editor: Can you tell me about your classmates in middle school PE?

Carson Jones: I have a lot of friends, we enjoyed PE in middle school because we get to laugh. We weren't in the classroom, sitting in chairs and just listening, we were able to joke around, move our bodies. It's like a break during the day.

Editor: Can you tell me a particular story about a time that you got to laugh a lot in PE?

Carson Jones: We practiced hitting golf balls my sophomore year at Rowe Park, which is close to the high school. One of my friends hit a ball into the tree and it got stuck. We tried to hit other balls at it to get it down, but we weren't successful, it may still be up there.

Editor: Do you have any negative memories of middle school PE?

Carson Jones: The mile run. If you don't improve your time by 1 second, you have keep trying until you do. I knew about this because my sister told me, you always take your time the first time you do it because you must keep improving your time each year. We run it on the football field at the middle school.

Editor: Can you tell me what happened when you ran the mile?

Carson Jones: The first time I ran it in the fall of 6th grade, I ran slower than I normally do, I was able to improve my time in the spring. I ran it again in the spring and fall of 7th grade and improved my time again. I improved my time in the spring of 8th grade and we didn't run it in the fall because of Covid.

Editor: Tell me about PE in High School.

Carson Jones: Mr. Blum is my teacher.

- Editor:* What is your favorite thing about PE in high school?
- Carson Jones:* The diversity of the classes, we go bowling, golfing, archery, table tennis and more bike riding (which they replace with walking for me).
- Editor:* What is your favorite activity?
- Carson Jones:* Bowling, I guess.
- Editor:* Can you tell me about a typical day in high school PE? What is good, or not so good?
- Carson Jones:* We arrive, change into PE clothes (shorts and t-shirt, purchased by parents), go sit and wait for our teacher to arrive. Our teacher takes attendance and then we do the planned activity. Some of the activities are yard games, croquet, horseshoes, bean bag, ladder golf and disk golf or sports basketball, soccer, baseball, football and tennis. There are different kinds of PE to choose from: Lifetime Activity where you do golf, bowling, yard games and table tennis, Outdoor Activities—all things outdoors biking, kayaking, fishing and hiking, Strength and Conditioning where you lift weights on the bench, squats, dead lift and free weights and improve the amount of weight lifted or Team Sports where you play activities as a team. I have chosen Lifetime Activities and Strength and Conditioning. Lifetime Activities was my favorite because we were able to play games I enjoy.
- Editor:* Can you tell me anything else about the Lifetime Activities unit and why you like it?
- Carson Jones:* Lifetime activities are golf, table tennis, frisbee, croquet, horseshoes, bean bags. These are games I play with my family in the summer.
- Editor:* Can you tell me about your classmates in high school PE?
- Carson Jones:* I mostly stay by my friends, so we laugh a lot.
- Editor:* What is it that makes you laugh a lot?
- Carson Jones:* My friends always make me laugh; PE is a place we don't have to sit quietly. We get to move, joke around, and enjoy ourselves.
- Editor:* Is there anything you don't like about PE?
- Carson Jones:* I can't think of anything.
- Editor:* So, you've told us about PE and about school in general. Can you tell us any differences or similarities you see between PE and other classes?
- Carson Jones:* PE is similar because you are still learning, we spend a class period learning about what we are going to do before we do it, so no one gets hurt or done incorrectly.

Editor: Did you ever participate in school sports? If so, which ones?

Carson Jones: I don't, I'm not really an organized sports guy. My favorite sport to watch is Baseball, go Milwaukee Brewers!

Editor: Why did you select those sports?

Carson Jones: It's something we enjoy as a family, it's fast moving and great to watch in person.

Editor: If not, why didn't you try to participate in school sports?

Carson Jones: I don't like the attention, everyone watching me makes me anxious.

Editor: What advice would you give new teachers?

Carson Jones: See the student, not their disability. Make sure they feel included.

14

PUSHING PAST EXPECTATIONS

Angela West

Introduction

My name is Angela. I was diagnosed with cerebral palsy when I was about a year old, as I was not meeting the typical developmental milestones. Doctors described my future as having many obstacles and impossibilities. My parents always expected so much more from my life since I was young, and I have had opportunities to accomplish goals beyond what I could ever have imagined. They fought for me to be fully integrated into the general education classroom for years. As a result of this educational journey, I have been able to complete a master's degree, as well as have a career supporting people with disabilities in their advocacy journeys.

When people think about a good education, they usually focus on reading, writing, and math. While these subjects are fundamental, many other life skills can be learned in PE. Students' memories of PE class can be about exercising or playing sports, but other lessons may be about increasing strength, endurance, and determination. These character-building skills are just as essential as other skills in life. As a student with a physical disability, there were times when my experiences were great, and there were also times when things could have been improved. Both positive and negative experiences in my education were critical and helped shape me into who I am today.

Lower Elementary School Experience

My first memory of PE class was in second grade. Even though educational opportunities were open to students with disabilities, inclusion did not often

happen organically in my school district. This new learning environment created opportunities for growth and exploration that were fundamental to my early childhood development.

One of the specific aspects that I remember about my first PE teacher is that she expected me to do more than sit in my wheelchair. I rarely got out of my wheelchair except during therapy sessions or at home. One day, she took me aside and asked if I wanted to ride on the scooters like the rest of the class. Nervously, I tried it and, over time, learned to stay on the scooter and push myself with my arms and legs. I certainly did not maneuver the scooter as fast, but I understood that I had to put in the work if I wanted to move somewhere and play with the other students.

It is extremely vital for teachers to have high expectations for their students and provide them opportunities to leave their comfort zones. Because my teacher had high expectations, I learned I could navigate the world away from my wheelchair and still be successful. This laid the foundation for building confidence in getting around independently in a new environment. Reflecting on this as an adult, I am thankful I had that support as a child. While my wheelchair is a vital tool, it does not determine my success; my attitude does.

As I was getting comfortable with leaving my chair for short periods, I would only participate in some of the activities while watching others. After I became increasingly confident in my abilities, my teacher assigned me to a squad. This group of five students did exercises or played on a team together. I remember the day I parked my wheelchair at the door and crawled to sit with my squad without her asking. I finally belonged.

Every couple of weeks, we would have to rotate as squad leaders. I was nervous because I knew I could not model the exercises correctly. However, the paraprofessional assigned to me reassured me that she would help me, but only if I needed it with something specific. I didn't believe I could do it, and I was nervous. She sat behind me, held me by my waist, and I led my squad. My exercises probably were not perfect, but I was proud because it was the first time I developed a voice as a leader. The goal was to demonstrate the exercises, but my self-esteem was strengthened, and I believed I'd improve over time and practice.

Looking back on this experience, I see so much value in being a squad leader. I was reserved and did not use my voice with people unfamiliar with my speech patterns. When I was in this environment, I was focused on the task and wanted to complete the goal I was given. The class was in a trailer, where every voice had to compete with all the other sounds, so I had to learn to control my posture and make my voice travel farther. Simultaneously, this helped me build my core muscles, increasing my ability to perform other tasks.

The opportunity to learn to use my voice effectively to a larger crowd would have been more challenging for me to develop in individual speech

therapy. When surrounded by peers, I was encouraged to focus on a task assigned by pushing myself to accomplish a set goal.

The skills and abilities I learned in this PE class transferred to other activities outside the classroom. For example, let's examine reaching exercises. As a child with spastic cerebral palsy, it was difficult for me to reach out and pick up an object without knocking over things beside it. I tried to compensate for this by moving my body closer to the object, using my whole body for stability. While this was effective in some scenarios, the ability to reach out my arm and grab an item farther away was an essential skill that I needed to be able to perform. After several months of repetitive exercises, I built up the muscles to complete the task with my dominant arm, my right arm. My teacher was not satisfied with how much I was neglecting the use of my left side. She placed objects on my left side, and I would attempt to sneak to grab them with my right hand. When she would catch me, she would give me that "teacher look," and I knew to put it back and try again with my left hand.

I didn't understand the benefits of being motivated to try new things at the time, but I believe educators can foster an environment where students with disabilities understand they are supported. Some students may come from a background where they are constantly told about their weaknesses, and that is the end of the conversation. Or, on the opposite side of the spectrum, their weaknesses are ignored completely. The classroom allows students to learn techniques to address their weaknesses. If teachers overlook weaknesses, students may be surprised or unprepared to face reality outside the classroom. *Teachers must find a balanced approach to addressing students' strengths and weaknesses to sustain a productive learning environment as they prepare students for the future.*

Higher Elementary School Experience

Upon entering the 4th grade, I was transferred to the neighborhood school because I did not need the intensive support of a special education teacher. Initially, this was a difficult move because the students had previously established relationships. As I became friends with some of my classmates over time, the PE class gave me more opportunities to learn about my abilities alongside my trusted peers.

My PE teacher focused more on physical activities than just playing games, unlike my previous teacher. This was very intimidating initially, and frankly, I didn't enjoy being there. This drastic change in expectations was confusing to me. The first few days, I did not understand the importance of the class or why I even needed to attend. To add to the dread, I felt like I did not belong. The next time we returned to his class, something changed my views on my physical abilities. We had to complete the fall assessment, and I remember dreading my turn because I knew I could not complete any of the required

tasks. The only part I was grateful for was that he had activities for the rest of the class while each student completed their assessment. When it was my turn, he took extra time, allowing me to try each activity. To my great surprise, I was able to complete more than I thought I could. I remember his facial expressions and how happy he was to see me learning more about my physical capabilities. That day, I gained confidence, and he became a teacher I trusted to continue trying new things with.

When the class played games like kickball, he would assign me to a team like all the other students. Again, I wondered if I could even participate, but he always planned on accommodating my needs. Sometimes, he would push me around the bases or catch the ball and hand it to me so I could get someone out. I played games and participated in physical activities I never thought I could. This made me feel like I belonged in class and not like a visitor. When we won a game, I could celebrate with the team and felt like I was a part of the success. I learned what we could do better as a team when we lost.

It is vital to remember that communication is essential to formulating a positive relationship with students with disabilities during PE class. I knew what I could do and was hesitant to participate fully, but now, I often wonder how my life would be completely different if I hadn't been encouraged to try new activities. I have held on to that thought process even in my adult life. For example, I was invited to go skiing using a bi-ski a few years ago. A bi-ski is a seat attached to a ski, and a person is on their own ski behind, tethered by a rope, providing support as needed. For a person who is newer to the slopes, the person in the back controls the bi-ski's direction. My initial thought was 'absolutely not'! Going down a mountain without being able to control the direction in which I was headed terrified me. Still, I remembered my PE teacher's lessons about taking risks with the appropriate support. To my great surprise, skiing is now my favorite winter activity.

Middle School Experience

My middle school PE experience was quite different from previous years. My neighborhood middle school was not completely wheelchair accessible, so I was sent to a new school again. My confidence in my physical abilities dropped significantly. Some of it was due to the hormonal changes in my preadolescent body and how rapidly my body was changing. No one took the time to explain this concept to me, so a part of me thought I was losing some of my physical abilities. This was very difficult for me to understand, and I was scared that I would be unable to do things I had always done. I felt like I was focusing on the negatives and thought I was alone.

Having conversations about body changes during this time is essential for all students. However, when these changes are happening to someone

with a disability, the effects can be intensified. For example, I would crawl around the house when I was smaller. This was the primary way I completed everyday tasks, but as my body grew, I lost the ability to carry my weight. It was tough to navigate the change. I would have greatly benefited from conversations about how to learn a new way to get around independently. *With adequate support, students can learn and try new techniques to adapt to changes and be successful.* An interdisciplinary team should address this approach. Meaning it is not the sole responsibility of the PE teacher. Still, the PE teacher must be able to collaborate with physical therapists, occupational therapists, and any other members of the student's IEP team to establish goals of building upon the student's strengths and abilities.

I was going to PE class, but very few accommodations were made. I was assigned to a squad but don't remember participating in team activities. I mostly sat on the sidelines and watched the class complete the exercises and games. This was a unique feeling because I hadn't experienced anything like this in my other classes. In all of our classes, I did everything alongside the other students. To be with my friends, I sometimes attempted to push myself in my manual wheelchair while the class completed running laps, but I became unmotivated because I could not keep up with anyone. Eventually, I stopped trying to push my chair and let others do it for me. At this stage of life, I was more concerned about connecting with peers than exercising. That was a sacrifice that I was willing to make even if I had to give up building strength, but I didn't understand the consequences.

One of the other accommodations was assigning a student to do different activities with me during class. I understand the intent behind this practice was to make me feel included; however, it had the opposite effect on me. Sometimes, I felt like the students didn't want to do the activities with me, while others viewed it as an escape from doing the more physical activities. Some students made their views very clear to me. I overheard a student once telling the teacher she wanted to play the game with the other students because they were quicker than me. I was heartbroken, but at the same time, I understood where she was coming from; I was slower. I told my paraprofessional I did not want to be known as the "class project." My IEP team met, and they decided to send me to an adaptive PE class. I intentionally say "they" because I felt I had little of an influential voice in the decision. I thought that this decision-making process was about solving the surface issue and abandoning who I was as a student. As tough as my class was, I did not want to move to a new one.

I had positive and negative experiences in the adaptive PE class. Some exercises challenged me physically, such as throwing the ball with both hands toward a lowered basketball hoop or picking bean bags up off the floor. This was the first time I had been out of breath from doing physical activities since

elementary school. I also learned how to push myself by using both arms simultaneously. I enjoyed moving short distances independently.

The hardest part about the adaptive class was the lack of peer-to-peer support. I did not know how to communicate with the other students effectively because the other students did not communicate verbally. Peer support was so important to me because I had received such positive feedback in my early school years, and this was such a dramatic shift in social exchanges. The teachers were very encouraging, but I believe peer encouragement is just as impactful on students with disabilities, if not to a greater degree. I missed laughing, learning from our mistakes together, and being able to share funny stories about what happened in our PE class. Sometimes, I heard stories from peers about playing kickball against the teachers, and I could not relate because I was not there. Some days, I could brush it off, but other days, the pain of being left out was raw.

High School Experience

My PE experience in high school was very short and full of hardships. The type of diploma I was seeking required two PE classes. During my freshman year, the PE class was split between PE and health, lasting half the school year.

All students were required to dress out during PE class. My IEP team thought it would be a good idea for me to dress out also; however, for the convenience of others, I only had to change my shirt. It seemed to me that I was only doing half of the requirement, and it made me feel uncomfortable because I was not being held to the same standards. I often wondered what the learning objective was in only changing my shirt. I had always heard about these objectives in IEP meetings and internally questioned how this requirement would benefit me. The team may have had a good reason for having me dress out for class, but I did not understand why because I mostly sat on the sidelines and cheered for my friends as they played games. In this instance, I did not verbalize my questions because I was still getting used to many different teachers and gaining some independence.

I can only remember once feeling like I had accomplished something during the class. My paraprofessional and another teacher held each of my arms, and I walked a quarter of the track. I was out of breath, but I felt proud of how far I had walked. My friends cheered, and I loved every minute of it. I wish I had more opportunities like this one. Sadly, that was the last activity that pushed me to excel in my physical ability in a PE class.

A repeated theme is that teachers must have high expectations for students with disabilities and communicate them to the student. Simply changing my shirt without understanding the purpose was a missed learning opportunity. I now understand how this taught me responsibility by ensuring my uniform was washed and ready for the next class. This could have been a perfect

opportunity to teach about responsibility and how lessons can be transferred to any other obligations. Teachers must build on these skills to prepare students for life after school.

I fully participated in the health portion of the curriculum. I enjoyed learning about the body and how the different systems work together. I realized that my body was somewhat different from the other students. This was the first time I had an in-depth look at cerebral palsy outside the doctors' offices. I don't think my teacher was prepared for all the questions I asked, but that leads to another essential point in the learning process. It is impossible for teachers to know all about the different disabilities and how a disability may affect each student. *Teachers should admit when uncertain about the topic and commit to learning more with the student.* I understand teachers may have some time and attention restraints, but this is why it is critical to know who the subject matter experts in the school district and community are. The willingness-to-learn approach positively affects the attitudes of the students.

My school taught driver's education during PE class in our sophomore year. My IEP team decided I would not be eligible for a driver's license, so I was placed in an individualized study hall where I worked on my homework. This was very hard for me because even though I recognized I would not earn a driver's license, I wanted to be with my peers during an exciting time that we looked forward to ever since we were young. I heard stories from the class and wished I could have been a part of those memories. I understood why I was not included, but that did not make it easier. I never voiced my thoughts with anyone on my IEP team because I knew my academic achievement was very important to my parents and me, especially with college being close. So, turning the PE period into a study hall was the end of my PE experience, and even though it was difficult, I have learned to value true inclusion and how it may look different for every student. I firmly believe that the student and the IEP team should set achievable goals together to create a road map to success.

Conclusion

Looking back on my whole experience in PE throughout the years, I'm grateful for all the ups and downs. It brings me so much joy to remember the laughter and lessons I learned in some classes. I see the tenacity I had to keep up with my peers and discover the abilities I did not know I had. Working hard to achieve goals laid the foundation of my work ethic as an adult working with younger people with disabilities. Some mistakes were made by others or myself, but each part of my story has made me into the person I am today. I'm grateful I can share my story to encourage others to be the best that they can be.

Questions¹

1. What were some of the character-building activities that occurred throughout my PE experiences?
2. How did some of my teachers build trust with me? What would you have done differently when trust was not built?
3. Why is it essential to share PE learning objectives with students of all abilities? Provide examples from my story.
4. What skills are needed to maintain a willingness-to-learn approach for all students with and without disabilities?
5. What would the conversation sound like if you talked to me about being in the driver's education class, knowing I probably would not have the ability to drive?

Note

- 1 These are author-created questions designed by Angela.

15

AUTISM IN THE LOCKER ROOM

Tanner Williams

As an autistic individual, I hated gym class. The reason I hated gym class was due to the noise that would be made throughout the class, incidents involving bullying, and the effect it had on all my classes following gym.

Often times, the problems would start with our lunch break, which came right before gym class. The cafeteria was full of screaming kids and people, which would put me on edge before gym even began. At this point, I wasn't totally overloaded or overwhelmed, but it was only the start. After lunch, a very loud bell would sound, signaling us to transfer to the next class. This would often have me slightly irate before gym, which would set up bullying to follow shortly after.

When we got to gym class, we would immediately change into our gym uniforms, so we'd be sent straight to the lockers. The banging of the gym lockers would often cause me to involuntarily shake and twitch. This wasn't helped when the boys in the locker room would be extremely loud, usually shouting at each other or shouting at me so they could hear each other. I would often try to rush to put my gym clothes on and dart out of the locker room as fast as I could, often covering my ears to muffle the noise ensuing around me. The bullying would start right around this point as I became more hair-trigger to everyone around me. I would often lash out at even the most harmless of insults or inconveniences.

During actual gym class, the sound wouldn't be much better if we were inside the gymnasium. The acoustics of the gymnasium would cause the sound to bounce all around the room, which was usually the result of gym teachers and other kids shouting out loud. This would cause me to sweat immensely, hyperventilate and become irate to most things around me. This further instigated the bullies around me, who would often make fun of the

way I would react to being shouted at or even to physical contact or violence. At one point, I was pushed hard into the metal fence surrounding our track outside, and I started to cry and cover my face. I was also called a number of slurs such as “r*tard” due to my reactions, although that was far from the only name I was given.

After class, we’d all go back into the lockers, when the banging, clanging, shouting and screaming would repeat, which would amplify the negative effects I was already feeling. During this part of the day, the bullying was the worst, because the boys would often mock the way I was reacting to loud banging and screaming in the lockers, which they would intentionally do to mess with me. I’d often try to change as fast as I could to avoid dealing with the noise and bullies. This would often result in me forgetting some of my things in the locker, forcing me to go back inside. After changing, we’d make our way to our next class.

My next class immediately after gym was science class, which suffered the most when it came to the aftermath of gym. My irate behaviors and overwhelmedness made me not be as attentive or motivated and being constantly on edge. One way I found to unwind and calm my nerves was to frequently use the restroom after gym class, where I would sit in the stall for ten minutes or so, just taking time to gradually relax in peace. This however had negative consequences for my science class, which suffered due to both my method of unwinding and my teacher not making an effort to understand the troubles I was experiencing.

All of this would start to get better when my gym teacher noticed the problems I was having with gym and bullies. She’d eventually bring this to the attention of my school guidance counselor, who would end up putting me in a “break block,” where I (and a couple of other students) could work on homework and assignments for other classes.

16

PE AND SPORTS ARE AWESOME!

Matthew McGeary

Matthew McGeary: I'm 20 years old and I'm in a special needs program called Project LIVE, part of my high school that I went to. So, I do life skills like laundry and cooking.

Mom: And they have APE.

Matthew McGeary: We do APE on Monday, Tuesdays and Thursdays. So, we have done swimming, biking, walking on the track.

Editor: Which one's the best? Which one do you like the most?

Matthew McGeary: Biking on ... Biking.

Mom: It's a recumbent bike, right? Okay.

Editor: How long have you been a part of Project LIVE?

Matthew McGeary: This is my second year.

Mom: I think Mom witnessed. Who is kind of the one that runs the exercises before your games. And who calls that? What did Mom watch? What did Mr. Johnson¹ ... Mr. Johnson is his special education teacher. And before one of the games, I'm watching Matthew. So, they do the exercise drills and things, warmups. And Matthew's calling the drills. It's not the coach. So, they've delegated that to Matt and he's done that.

Editor: Ah. Matthew, tell me more about yourself. You said you like sports a lot, right?

Matthew McGeary: Yes.

Editor: So, what sports do you like?

Matthew McGeary: I like hockey. Hockey, baseball, football, basketball, volleyball, and softball. Because they're fun to watch.

I enjoy playing some of them and enjoy watching them on TV and in person too.

Editor: How did you learn how to play all those sports?

Matthew McGeary: I played medical league baseball at the Y from age eight until I was 19 years old.

Editor: And it sounds like this Project LIVE, this is part of your like a transition program at the high school, is that correct?

Matthew McGeary: Yes.

Editor: And you say that you have APE three times a week. Tell me a little about APE.

Matthew McGeary: Well, we work out upstairs or we work out in the gym. So, we do some workouts, like hip workouts. Or we do some classes with the Y. Like I've done Pilates on Tuesdays, and that's a really hard class, but I enjoyed that class.

Editor: So how do you feel when you're in your APE class?

Matthew McGeary: I feel good. It's good for me to work out so I can get stronger.

Editor: Who else is in that class with you?

Matthew McGeary: I have my classmates, my friends, Josie, Kaitlyn, Alana, and Derek. Those are my classmates in Project LIVE. They're really nice and friendly. I know my friend Josie since freshman year of high school, and my friend Alana and I know each other since daycare.

Editor: That's cool. So, Matthew, you were in a PE class in high school, too?

Matthew McGeary: I did badminton and pickle ball for APE in high school that I liked. And I enjoy it because it was fun and move around a lot. And I also played volleyball in PE in high school too.

Editor: And so that was with other students at the high school?

Matthew McGeary: Yes.

Editor: What else can you tell me about that general PE class that you took in high school? It's okay if you need to think a little bit too.

Matthew McGeary: It's hard. It's hard to remember.

Mom: But you took class with regular ed kids.

Matthew McGeary: Yeah.

Mom: So, he had an adaptive PE coach with the regular ed coach. So, he took classes, they combined them at [the high school]. And I don't know all the things that they

did, but Matthew has to think about. Think of all the activities you did from ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade.

Matthew McGeary: I did spike ball for APE, like for outside. And team handball.

Editor: Do you remember sort of any of your classmates in the regular PE class?

Matthew McGeary: I don't remember. Well, I know two of my friends were in my regular PE class, my friend Ian and my friend Cierra.

Editor: And they were both in your APE and regular PE classes?

Matthew McGeary: Yeah, they were.

Mom: Well, what they do a lot is they have a regular PE class and then they have the APE coach in with the regular PE class and they do it all together. It's just that the APE coach or teacher assists those that are on IEPs that are within the class. So, they don't have a separate PE class for just APE. They do it within a normal classroom. And then according to what's in their IEP, that APE teacher will go and depending on their challenges or their strengths or whatever, help and coach them out while they're participating in the normal PE class with other kids.

Editor: Does that sound about right, Matthew?

Matthew McGeary: Yeah.

Editor: So, then Matthew, do you remember if you liked "regular" PE?

Matthew McGeary: Yes. And in elementary school, middle school and high school I did.

Editor: Can you tell me stories from elementary?

Mom: Oh, gosh. Tell them how you have an awesome coach that ... She was the regular ed coach and she did APE, Mrs. Bishop.

Matthew McGeary: Mrs. Bishop was my APE teacher when I was in elementary school. She's also a very good PE teacher, but she works at [a different school] now. She taught me a lot of things in APE. So, we did some activities, but I don't remember what they were though.

Editor: But you remember that it was a lot of fun?

Matthew McGeary: Yes. Because she's nice and she's just a good teacher. She would say nice things about me. She challenged me a couple of times.



FIGURE 16.1 Matthew after his adapted sports league game at school.

Editor: What was that like?

Matthew McGeary: I don't remember.

Editor: Yeah, it was a long time ago, huh? You're doing a great job, Matthew. I know it's really hard to remember. So, I hear you're also really involved with things like an adapted sports league.

Matthew McGeary: Yep (see Figure 16.1).

Editor: How did you get involved in the adapted sports league?

Matthew McGeary: I don't know about ...

Mom: Well, me as his mother, I would tell you this. Matthew lives in a very rich community that has APE and sports and things for anybody with disabilities, especially young kids, they have so many opportunities here that I don't think are very prevalent in other parts of the country.

- Editor:* Ah. And so, Matthew, how much did you get practice in your adapted sports league?
- Matthew McGeary:* I started my freshman year of my high school, and this is my sixth year of adapted sports league.
- Editor:* And do you think your PE experiences helped get you interested and ready for this league?
- Matthew McGeary:* Yes. I enjoy playing [in] it so I can be around with other people that I enjoy playing with.
- Editor:* And you play a lot?
- Matthew McGeary:* Practice Tuesdays and Thursdays. And then we also have games on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So, for home games we play at 4:15 and then away games between four o'clock and 4:15. It depends where we're playing on the road.
- Editor:* Wow, what type of sports?
- Matthew McGeary:* All three of them are indoor. So, in the fall we do indoor soccer. In the winter is indoor floor hockey. And then in the spring right now is indoor baseball with a wiffle ball.
- Editor:* And so, is this sports league affiliated with the school or is it more like community-based?
- Mom:* It's affiliated with the high school and the Project LIVE program.
- Editor:* Matthew, what do you want to do after you graduate from Project LIVE?
- Matthew McGeary:* Do more of Special Olympics.
- Editor:* You are also doing Special Olympics right now?
- Matthew McGeary:* Yeas, bowling in the fall, and track and field in the spring. For track and field, the 100-meter dash and shot put. The shot put is really heavy.
- Editor:* What's your favorite event out of all those?
- Matthew McGeary:* Probably bowling.
- Mom:* I'm going to tell you this. I'm not just his mother, but this young man, he has placed, he's won state in bowling. He is placed first in his division at shot put, which is amazing because he has hypotonia. So that even amazed me that he could do that. He's very precise in what he does. It's stuff that they can do while they're in elementary school, high school, and even afterwards, they do this in addition. Star Center Sports that he's done in the past is another extension. What you do at the Star Center Sports?

Matthew McGeary: I've done floor hockey and baseball inside too. And one year of sled hockey.

Editor: It's amazing how many resources for sport participation there is in your community. So, Matthew, when do you think you gained your love for sports and for physical activities?

Matthew McGeary: I've been a sports fan since sixth grade. Well, baseball used to be my ... Baseball was my first favorite sport and then I changed it [to] hockey. It's a faster game. It's a faster game than baseball. And they also play a long time, because baseball doesn't have a time limit, but hockey does because they play 20 minutes, three periods. We don't do checks. So, for adapted PE, we still play three periods. We don't play 20 minutes, we play 15. I like to play center offense, left wing and right ring.

Editor: That's so cool. We talked about elementary and high school, but did you have PE in middle school?

Matthew McGeary: I did in middle school, yeah. I had Mrs. Fisher and Mrs. Jenkins. Both of them were, well, Mrs. Fisher was my middle PE teacher for sixth, seventh, and eighth. And then Mrs. Jenkins was my assistant PE teacher with me for sixth and seventh grade. So, we had some boys and some girls [in PE].

Mom: What do you remember in middle school that was challenging for you that you had to work on specifically?

Matthew McGeary: Moving around to try to get open, if we're doing an activity, like team handball. That was hard. That was hard because I had to guard a person. It's hard to get open when you're guarding a person because you have to keep moving until you get open. It's not easy. Some of [the competitors] were short, some of them were tall. They were just really good, and they were just better than me. I didn't really get mad at it, I was okay with it.

Editor: It sounds like you've had a lot of really great PE and APE teachers throughout your school experience.

Matthew McGeary: Yes.

Mom: So, his love of sports, and he increases his love of sports through the connections of teachers, whether it be APE or his special education teachers. I mean that's really, I would say yes, between the teachers that he's

had and the coaches that he has, he has increased his interest in sports.

Editor: So, Matthew, is that right?

Matthew McGeary: Yes.

Editor: Awesome. And so, do you have anything else you want to add, Matthew? Because I think we covered a lot.

Matthew McGeary: I think that's good enough.

Note

1 All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

17

FITNESS WITH FUN AND FRIENDS

Grace Gourley

*Grace Gourley*¹:

I turned 16 in July (2024). I like to sing—I like listening and singing to Taylor Swift—and I like to act, and I like spending time with my family and my nurses that come to my home. I like to have fun! My favorite subject is art, and I like to play board games. I'm nice, a little silly and a little serious, I'm friendly and social, sometimes I'm quiet and I want to just stay at home. I care a lot about other people, and I don't really like it when people just focus on me. I waited a long time for my new heart. I got a new heart and liver on January 24th–25th and I was in the hospital for seven and a half months.

*Project Coordinator*²
(PC):

How is recovery going?

Grace Gourley:

Good. It was a long process because lots of things were happening and stuff.

PC:

That's good to hear. So, please share what are some of the best memories you have of PE?

Grace Gourley:

Well, some of the best memories are the Adapted PE Olympics with you, because my friends used to cheer me on, and that was really fun because we got popsicles at the end, and we got medals and stuff. That was during school.

PC:

For adapted PE in elementary school, right? And so, for that adapted PE class, you were with me and Ms. Elle.³

- Grace Gourley:* I remember we did it with sixth-grade buddies, I think.
- PC:* You had some buddies come in and help sometimes, yeah. And so, tell me more about adapted PE.
- Grace Gourley:* I liked the scooters, and I liked the obstacle courses. I liked [PE] with my whole class, because we had more people to participate. I liked playing “Sharks and Minnows.” I remember playing Sharks and Minnows. And I like working out with my class. I remember we did skipping and stuff at the beginning.
- PC:* So, it was the adapted PE teacher who taught that class. And then, what about your other elementary PE class? Were there other fun games from PE that you remember that weren’t with me and Ms. Elle?
- Grace Gourley:* No, not really.
- PC:* What were the things in PE that were the hardest for you?
- Grace Gourley:* Probably, the running. It was kind of difficult. It made me tired really easily. Probably because I was working a lot. I don’t know. Well, I learned how to balance, and I learned how to throw, do an overhand throw, and an underhand throw. [The PE teachers] taught me lots of stretches and stuff to make it so I’m flexible more. Sometimes, the stretches were really hard, and it was kind of hard to do. PE helps me with my strength and balance and endurance. I learned most of it in a large class, I did that alongside my peers.
- PC:* In middle school, I wasn’t your teacher anymore. Was your middle school teacher an adapted PE teacher or a regular PE teacher?
- Grace Gourley:* I had two. I think they were adaptive PE teachers.
- PC:* So, and this is before your surgeries, what did you do in PE in middle school?
- Grace Gourley:* We stretched and we learned about the Winter Olympics, like skiing, bobsledding and stuff. So, we practiced that type of stuff kind of. It was PE in a class with a whole bunch of other students. I liked how we were so interactive with each other.
- PC:* It sounds like making friends and fitting in, being a part of a group was really important for you in PE?
- Grace Gourley:* Yeah.

- PC: So, tell me more about that middle school class.
- Grace Gourley: [The activities] were kind of tricky, but they were mostly easy. One that was easy was ... Oh yeah, I remember. I think we did this one that was easy, which you sat on a scooter and a lot of people pushed you, and you went on the tile, and you went through the cones, I think is one of them. And then, one that was hard ... I don't really think there was any that was hard.
- PC: In your written outline, you say, "I remember in middle school I had peer tutors that helped and did the exercises with me." Can you tell me a little bit more about that?
- Grace Gourley: So, in Ms. Veronica's class we had peer tutors, and they went to classes with us. So, they came with us and they did PE with us. They were friends. They didn't tell you what to do, but if you were off task, they'd nicely be like, "You need to keep up with the class," or something. They're not teachers, but they're friends. I liked [having peer tutors], because it made me feel like I had somebody to do stuff with me and to help me with my workout and stuff.
- PC: What made PE easy to make friends and socialize with friends?
- Grace Gourley: I don't know. I think just the experience I had with them. We had to help each other work out and stuff, like with the activities.
- PC: What are things you wish you could do in PE, or you wish you would've done in PE?
- Grace Gourley: Things I wish I would've done in PE is work out more, stretch more, got my body moving more.
- PC: You wrote here that you wish you could have learned to do a cartwheel.
- Grace Gourley: Oh, yeah. I kind of want to do a cartwheel. Yeah, I wish there was more gymnastics stuff like bar and the balance beam. Well, I know we did the balance beam, but the bar and stuff.
- PC: You also wrote, "I also loved when everyone got to see me improve and I liked it when my peer leaders got to help me exercise." Please tell me more about that.
- Grace Gourley: Well, I liked how my family got to see all the cool stuff I did that I couldn't do before, like running and

stuff that. I liked it how my peer tutors helped me exercise a bunch. The teachers always made me feel like I belonged in PE.

PC: So, having some of those connections with your middle school adapted PE teachers was important?

Grace Gourley: Yes.

PC: Now you are in high school. You've recently had your surgeries. How do you receive PE right now? Is it home-based?

Grace Gourley: Yeah. Well, there's people who come to my house, Mr. Bob comes to my house. The first time he came, we went on a walk to get to know each other more. So, we've been working on stepping and throwing, that type of stuff. PE still helps me today, because I'm still learning a bunch of stuff, like how to overhand throw stuff and underhand throw stuff. It helps me get stronger and it helps me be able to do things I wasn't able to do because before my transplant. I couldn't do lots of stuff. Like stretching. I would get really tired. I like that Mr. Bob comes to help me get stronger.

PC: Do you wish there were peers around?

Grace Gourley: I don't know. I kind of wish there were my peers around, but my little sister kind of does it with us, so I guess it's okay since she kind of does it.

PC: Having those social interactions and being able to do stuff with friends, was that an important thing in PE for you?

Grace Gourley: Yeah, it was.

PC: Switching gears a bit, if you could change anything about PE, what would that be?

Grace Gourley: I don't really think I'd change anything except for I'd kind of change making it so the teachers would understand me a little bit more clearly. I don't know. Sometimes I kind of want the teachers to understand how hard it is for me. I mean, they understand how hard it is. I just wish they were more understanding about it. I don't know. Well, they understand me pretty much all the time. I just feel like they could do a little bit better.

PC: So, you wish the teachers could understand what you go through with your transplants and stuff a little bit more? Is that—

- Grace Gourley:* Yeah, that's exactly what I mean. I wish ... They've known I just had a transplant. You can't expect me to work really, really hard, except for, I can work hard. I just can't work that hard. I'm like most people, I just don't like work the same way they do.
- PC:* I can see that you are getting a little distressed telling this story.
- Grace Gourley:* Yeah.
- PC:* And that's okay. Talking about your experiences in PE may bring up difficult feelings.
- Grace Gourley:* Yes.
- PC:* And again, if at any point you'd like to take a break or stop, we can do that, too. Do you want to continue?
- Grace Gourley:* Yes.
- PC:* You also mentioned in your written outline, you said, "I liked when my teachers were nice and kind and they were also silly."
- Grace Gourley:* That was you. That's what I like is that you were silly in PE. You made PE fun to be in. What my teachers did to make PE good is they made it fun, and they helped us learn different types of stuff. A good PE teacher is responsible and funny and kind and knows how to teach you how to do things. What makes a bad PE teacher, if they're just sitting around being lazy, not helping anybody, not telling you what to do or anything.

Notes

- 1 Grace's chapter was based on a recorded conversation which drew heavily from a written outline she provided us. By doing so, Grace decided what was important for her to share with readers about her physical education experiences.
- 2 Paul Warner, who served as our project coordinator, facilitated this conversation. We should also note that Paul was Grace's adapted physical education teacher from Fall 2015 to Spring 2020. Because of this connection, Grace felt comfortable sharing her stories described here.
- 3 All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

18

SPORTS AS A BRIDGE TO SUCCESS IN LIFE

Thomas Greany

Introducing Thomas Greany

My name is Thomas Greany, and I am a freshman at the University of Wisconsin La Crosse. I started college as an education major; I think I chose this field because of all the great teachers I had during my years in school. But then I realized my real passion is sports and that it would be amazing if my career revolved around sports! I am a huge fan of all sports, especially “ball sports”—baseball, basketball, football, ping-pong, golf. I love to watch sports, talk sports, and play sports, although sometimes my understanding of the sport exceeds my ability to perform. I recently changed my major to Exercise/Sport Science with a concentration in Sports Management and am really looking forward to new classes in the fall. This summer, I will be an intern with the La Crosse Loggers Baseball team, focusing on Video/Webcast coverage of games and interviews with players ... pretty much a dream come true! I am thankful to all the people who helped me get to the wonderful place in life I am now.

But life was not always so wonderful. I was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder when I was 5 years old. It took that long for a diagnosis because although I had some early delays in speech and motor skills, I didn’t do many of the “stereotypical behaviors” except for lining up my cars and echoing speech. I was in regular classes throughout school, with supplemental speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and specialized PE. My dad is a physical therapist and my mom a nutritionist, so they investigated all sorts of approaches that might be helpful to me. In addition to school-based therapies, I did extra speech and occupational therapy, equestrian therapy, adaptive sports programs, a physical activity mentoring program,

and years of social skills workshops. As I improved, school therapies were removed from my IEP; I transitioned to a 504 plan in middle school. I also had digestive problems as a toddler and multiple food allergies. I followed a tree nut-free, peanut-free, gluten-free, dairy-free, artificial junk-free diet for many years; now I simply steer clear of tree nuts/peanuts, minimize gluten intake and eat what I want otherwise. I credit much of my progress to all these interdisciplinary therapies.

My parents shared with me that I had autism when I was in 2nd grade; I didn't believe them. I knew that physical activities were harder for me, and I had trouble speaking, but I didn't do the "weird" stuff that kids with autism did. It took a few years for me to accept that I had autism and for many years I was angry about it. Now, I think of it as a diagnosis but not a label or a description. Gradually, I have realized that while autism makes some things more difficult, it also brings gifts. Spoken instructions are easily confused/forgotten, but I have a great visual memory and can recall sports stats from games years ago. I may not be a pro at reciprocal conversation, but I can talk to pretty much anyone for at least a few minutes. My challenges have fostered persistence, optimism, and gratitude, characteristics that are valuable in college and any career. I hope that my story will bring insights and encouragement to those who read it.

4K/Preschool

My preschool history was a long time ago and it's something I don't think about or talk about much. I went to preschool for two years. That is difficult to share, because it sounds like I flunked preschool. But, looking back, I believe it really was the best choice for me and it is important for parents and professionals to consider this option. Even though I had been in a structured day-care setting a few days each week as a toddler, my first year at preschool was very, very hard. The differences between what I could do compared to other 4-year-olds were suddenly clear. After that year, I went for a 3-day evaluation and was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. My parents and teachers decided it would be best for me to do another year of preschool with therapies and participate in Head Start. Even though I grew up right across the street from an elementary school, I went to 4K at a different school so I could access the special services at that school and attend Head Start my second year.

Being in school all day and the number of things I was working on seemed overwhelming sometimes. I do not recall being self-conscious about being pulled out for therapies; it was just how school was for me back then. PE was "simple" childhood games like duck-duck-goose, but even that was challenging for me—getting to my feet from sitting cross-legged and struggling in vain to catch up with a classmate. I frequently struggled

with sensory overload during PE time: sunlight was painfully bright unless I wore sunglasses and a hat, kids bumping into me felt like I was being hit, and loud noises (fire drills, starter guns, timers/buzzers) were terrifying. My occupational therapist at preschool had me do therapeutic listening at home every day and shared dry brushing and other exercises with my parents to help me with at home. She reminded me a little of my grandma and was always kind and encouraging as I struggled with the tasks she prepared for me to work on. Overall, I remember feeling safe with the teachers who were helping me to learn things that came naturally to other little kids. I didn't have a lot of friends, but had one good friend each year that stayed by my side in the classroom.

Elementary School

Elementary school was a big step for me from 4K. I remember visiting and seeing kids jumping rope in PE class and being terrified because I could not jump rope at all. My parents and teachers helped me adjust to the new environment by making a photo book with pictures and names of all my new classrooms, teachers, and therapists; that was helpful in decreasing my anxiety. I had used a visual picture schedule at home during the summer to help me through each day. My parents and I "read" through my kindergarten book each day the week before I started kindergarten so I would be familiar with where to go, what the rooms looked like, and who my teachers were. After the first few days of school, I was able to walk across the street to school by myself, supervised by the crossing guard. Greeting the crossing guard and paying attention to traffic and other kids/parents/pets was good practice in social interactions and life skills.

In elementary school, I was in a regular class but was pulled out for occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, and specialized PE according to a schedule based on the school's 6-day cycle. I am glad I was in a regular class because it gave my peers opportunities to watch and learn from someone who has a disability. I went to PE class with my regular classmates a few times per week, also according to the 6-day cycle. My teacher always told us what cycle day it was in the morning so I would know what to expect that day; otherwise, it would have been confusing.

We did a variety of games in PE class, including flag football and basketball. I enjoyed these ball games because they utilized teamwork and were competitive in a positive way. I do not remember feeling left out or dreading teams being picked. By then I knew something about football and basketball and that helped me make sense of the games in class. We also had a gymnastics day. This was not so much fun. I remember struggling to climb a rope attached to the ceiling; this was really hard because I did not have the strength to grasp the rope or pull myself up. I was frustrated that I could

not climb the rope and all my friends in class could. It looked like it would be easy to just reach above my head, grab the rope, and move higher but it was pretty much impossible for me. I was trying my best but unfortunately failing, in front of everyone.

Required fitness testing in PE was a challenge. Standardized tests of any kind are not my strength and it was hard always being on the bottom end of the PE tests. Especially the “Pacer” test, where it got progressively harder as it advanced. I felt like a failure when I dropped out at the beginning even though I was trying my best but couldn’t keep up. The “sit and reach” test was not my favorite because of the stretch and not understanding how far to push myself. And then there were sit-ups, curl-ups, and push-ups. I did not have much core strength and all these were difficult.

In spite of the standardized testing and gymnastics, I enjoyed PE class because the teacher was enthusiastic, didn’t yell, and tried to make PE fun for everyone, myself included. My PE teacher always seemed to have a smile on her face. I think this is important, because when I see a smile it makes me think positive but when I see a nonsmiling face I don’t know if the person is angry, bored, or tired and I have negative thoughts about the situation. She also made sure to call each kid by name. Although it was a big job for the PE teacher to learn all the names, hearing my name makes me feel valued and important and I am guessing most kids feel the same way. I was smaller in size compared to other students in my class, but I was never really bullied about my size or abilities. PE classes were usually about 45 minutes long and a nice break from sitting at my desk. I actually looked forward to PE classes most days.

In addition to PE class with other kids, I had a specialized PE teacher. Some days she came to my class to help out and other days she did activities with me outside of class. The most important one was helping me learn to ride a 2-wheeled bike. It had been hard for me to learn to ride a big wheel or a scooter; I was the last kid in the neighborhood my age to figure out how to do these things no matter how much I practiced. My specialized PE teacher spent multiple sessions with me on the bike wearing a therapy belt and her jogging next to me as a guide. It was quite a struggle at first, but with lots of practice, I eventually got the hang of it. Once I learned to ride a bike, I was able to bike with friends and family or later bike to my job. This is an example of how for kids with autism, milestones that come easily to other kids are more challenging to achieve but are also much more celebrated once achieved.

I also had physical therapy, speech therapy, and occupational therapy in elementary school. I was pulled out of other classes once or twice during the 6-day cycle for each of these therapies. In the beginning of elementary school I didn’t mind being taken out of classes, but as I got older I didn’t like being singled out and potentially missing fun or important stuff. Even

though I knew I had autism, I tried to act like my peers as much as possible; I didn't want to be different. Being pulled out of classes made me different. I honestly don't remember much about what I did for physical therapy in school, but I often see my physical therapist at my job as a grocery cashier and enjoy saying hello. I think it might be encouraging for her to see a former student able to succeed at a job that requires coordination of motor skills and conversation. Occupational therapy in school is a bit fuzzy in my memory, but I recall working on "reflex integration" therapy where I was balanced on hands and knees and moved alternate arms and legs. Speech therapy included lots of work with pronunciation, conversation, and the famous "idiom of the week." Speech was my favorite, because I could directly see how it was helping me understand and communicate better.

In the middle of my elementary school years, my parents discovered the MeMoves® program, a video with specific arm movements choreographed to calming music. I began doing MeMoves® every morning before school and it helped to engage my brain and body to start the day. Before long, teachers at school were using it in their classrooms to help all students focus. I kept up with the MeMoves® practice until I started middle school; the middle school day began much earlier, and it was too stressful to fit it into my morning routine. My parents also worked with a local karate studio to do research on the effect of karate in kids with autism. I participated in the research study and continued martial arts for years afterward. I never reached the top belt levels, but karate improved my balance, coordination, confidence, and regulation. My karate teacher was always incredibly calm and patient, even with a roomful of unpredictable kids with autism.

Outside of school, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in other physical activity programs, both adaptive and regular. I started with YMCA Happy Bats at the advice of my specialized PE teacher after 1st grade. The program combined kids of all abilities (kids with a disability and siblings) all learning to play baseball. There were lots of coaches; each kid could have an individual coach if needed. We worked on basic skills of batting (usually off a tee) and fielding and then played some games. We met at a local park twice each week for an hour once during the summer. We also had a chance to play some games at Miracle Field, a special baseball diamond designed to accommodate players of all abilities. The other teams had players who were in a wheelchair or had significant cognitive challenges. While I don't think it is good to compare disabilities, those games showed me that other kids had much bigger struggles than me. Each session ended with a short talk about a positive character trait; it was a great way to end. Happy Bats nurtured my positive attitude and passion for the game of baseball. Being in an adaptive baseball league was a good start because I wasn't compared to typical kids and could learn at my own pace with someone at my side. The goal of YMCA baseball was learning to play as a team and most of all, having fun!

Later on in my elementary years, I played basketball in a regular YMCA league. It was a positive experience for me because I made some friends outside my school and learned more about basketball. During games, I was mainly a shooting guard/small forward. I definitely was more on the smaller size in terms of height on our team. Although I was not a star player, I was able to get playing time, score points, and feel like a valued part of the team. Another lesson learned from YMCA ball was respecting calls by the referees. Even if I thought they were wrong, I had to control my response and show respect. I also had to tolerate opponents and spectators who showed poor sportsmanship. Overall, my team had a great season and I had a blast. This YMCA program taught me about sports, but also social interactions and good character.

Also during elementary school, I would go to “Play Lab” once a week hosted by the Occupational Therapy program at the nearby university. There would be few other kids at the session, each paired with an occupational therapy student. “Play Lab” was great because it allowed me to get rid of energy after school and learn motor skills while doing fun activities. Examples of activities we did were: picking up as many pennies as I could in 1 minute, jumping in a pit of soft plastic balls, swinging in a rope hammock, and moving through an obstacle course. I also worked on life skills such as tying shoes, choosing clothes to match the weather, and later on, simple cooking tasks like making scrambled eggs. I enjoyed being a part of this occupational therapy program because I wasn’t compared to anyone else and wasn’t in front of a class of kids, plus I was helping the students learn. I preferred having someone other than my parents teach me life skills and it improved my fine motor skills.

Another unique local opportunity was the Physical Activity Mentoring program at the local university. This program paired kids and adults with a disability with a college student. At the beginning of the semester, partners set goals and discuss sports or activities, then we got together 1–2 times each week. I participated in this amazing program for many years. In elementary school, I had female mentors and we walked, hiked, biked, shot baskets, or tossed a football around. There were also group activities such as fishing, archery, bowling, and fun runs. As I got into middle school, I was paired with male mentors. Looking back, this was a beneficial change, as it helped me to learn how guys communicate with each other, in addition to working on physical activity. In middle school, I was introduced to the game of golf and often went golfing with my mentors. We would head to the local golf course for some putting practice or chipping practice and play a couple of holes on the course before calling it a day. This was a fantastic chance to improve my golf skills, work on communication and social expectations, and learn the unspoken rules on golf etiquette. Overall, the mentoring program had a positive impact on me because I got to do activities that I enjoyed

with students who tried to understand autism and really work with me. In fact, I would not be surprised if I became a mentor with the program in the future.

Middle School

I went to middle school with kids from several different elementary schools; this was a bit of a social adjustment, in addition to being at a new building and once again being the youngest grade. One bit of consistency for which I was thankful was that my specialized PE teacher also worked at the middle school. By this time, she knew and understood me, and was able to help me navigate the transition better. She also suggested I try the interschool golf team. I didn't really know much about golf, but lived near the golf course and was willing to give it a try (this was before I started golfing with my mentors). This program was funded by a grant and invited boys and girls from middle schools to practice and participate in tournaments several days each week during the fall. I credit this program with introducing me to the wonderful world of golf and how fun the sport can be. The coaches were helpful, although they had many young golfers of varying ability. I struggled at times with verbal instructions about golf techniques, but demonstrations and hand-over-hand guidance definitely helped me out. I got lost once at a meet because it got dark and, being a slower golfer, I was still out on the course. That made me feel awful because I knew I was not fast and was just trying to enjoy the game playing at my own pace. I was not a great golfer but had lots of fun learning. Golf also gave me an opportunity to work on holding a conversation with fellow golfers. In addition, it got me stronger from carrying my golf bag to the course and around the course while playing. Even though I am old enough to drive a golf cart now, sometimes I skip the cart and walk because that is how I got my early start in golf.

My middle school required PE class for two years. It was mainly games, such as volleyball, basketball, and a new game called Big Base. I was glad that Big Base is similar to baseball, because it was often hard for me to learn new PE games. All those rules explained verbally and no examples to follow had me lost before the game even started. I was not one to volunteer to be the first player up or to demonstrate the game because this was very hard. We also had more physical fitness testing, which continued to not be my favorite. Timed running tests, sit-ups, arm strength—these definitely highlighted my physical limitations and I would have rather skipped. Despite these challenges, I had friends in class to encourage me and the PE teacher was supportive of my efforts.

I decided to go out for basketball during middle school; it was not an option in 6th grade but by 7th grade I felt ready to try a regular school sport.

This is when I realized that I had a hard time following verbal instructions for drills and plays. If another player demonstrated, I could usually copy what he did, but if I had to go first, it was hard for me to remember what to do or to get my body to do what I wanted. Once the coach understood my struggles and knew not to have me go first at practice, it was better. I played point guard and shooting guard positions. My team won most of the games that we played, but I did not get a lot of playing time during games. I really wanted to be out there on the court with my teammates but accepted the role that the coach saw for me and took advantage of every opportunity to get on the court. Even though I was a “bench warmer,” I was a great teammate and encouraged my team while on the sidelines. I felt like a valued member of the team and being part of the team was important.

I gave track and field a try during the spring in an effort to become a faster runner. My dad had done hurdles and my mom was a distance runner during high school (they didn’t have track in middle school, a fact that was hard to believe). By then I knew I was a slow runner and not very strong or coordinated; I had no idea what event to try. My first attempt was running the 400-meter dash. This was considered a distance event in middle school and the coach had me run for a few miles with the distance group. But another slower runner and I got separated from the pack and were not sure of the route to get back to school. I was really scared that I was not going to get back to school by the end of practice. I think I came in last place during the 400-meter at meets. This felt awful because I was really running hard. I also gave the 100-meter dash a try but that was not any better. I attempted to use starting blocks for the 100-meter dash but didn’t really think they helped me get a fast start but instead seemed to slow me down. My last effort was the long jump. I enjoyed this event, probably because each athlete jumps individually and there is less comparing who is best and worst. Although I had great encouragement from teammates and coaches in track, I thought the coaches did not really have the time or expertise to adapt to my limitations.

In middle school, I spent several afternoons each week at a social skills program. The program was offered at a local autism treatment center and was staffed by wonderful therapists and college students hoping to become therapists. I started out as a beginning student and progressed to being a bit of a mentor my last year. Being part of this program was definitely pivotal in helping with my social skills. One aspect of the program was character names associated with mindsets, such as “Rockbrain” (when you get fixated on one thing and you can’t get it off your mind) and “Doof” (when you get really mad after you lose in a competitive sport/setting). These fun names were simple to remember and easier to be reminded of in real life situations. We did a lot of role-playing and talked through social stories at this program. It

provided an opportunity to interact with other kids who also had autism and to celebrate the progress we were making together.

High School

High school was another major transition for me. I had just the 504 accommodation plan and did not have any specific therapies. I took 2 PE classes during the summer because my school year schedule was too full. The first was an introductory Health and Wellness class that met for 4 hours each weekday for a month and replaced a daily semester course. I learned a lot about nutrition and how to take good care of your body. Most days, we were mainly learning in a classroom environment and then in the last hour of class, we got to have free time to play basketball or throw a football around. Some days were designated “fun days” or “pool days” where we would go for long bike rides, play games, or spend time in the high school pool. I did not like the classroom aspect, but I really enjoyed it when we had game days or fun days. I am not a strong swimmer due to lack of core strength and lack of interest in swimming, so these days were not as enjoyable.

My other summer PE course was Adventure Education. This class also met every weekday for a month, but the time seemed to fly by. We got to participate in many fun activities, such as rock climbing, visiting the National Guard Armory in Fort McCoy and going through some of the same drills they go through, and even completing a ropes course in Fort McCoy. We spent a day at a water park (much more fun than just swimming) and did long bike rides and hikes. This class was mostly a blast; I was older, more mature, and had friends who were in the class too. Some of the team-building drills at Fort McCoy were a little hard for me (all those verbal instructions), especially climbing up a wall.

My sophomore year of high school I took weight training, a semester-long PE course. This course had zero classroom instruction and was more of open gym time with a partner. I partnered with a friend in the class who also has autism but has a tougher time in school than me. It was a positive experience helping my friend with the exercises so he could get a solid workout. It felt good to be helpful, but also seemed like I didn't really learn new things or get challenged. Then COVID hit and classes were all online. My weight training teacher posted workouts for us to do with body weight or dumbbells (if we had them) at home. It was nice to know how weight training can be done at home in a pinch, but I definitely prefer the atmosphere of an energetic weight room.

I did not go out for basketball my freshman year of high school; I was intimidated being the youngest grade and didn't know how I would adjust

to a new bigger school. Sophomore year I really wanted to try basketball and went to fall practices. Unfortunately, I did not make the team. This was a huge disappointment. But I realized that most of the guys who did make the team had played basketball on club teams over the summer and on travel teams during the year. High school basketball was much more intense than middle school. One of my challenges was that I wasn't as quick, agile, and aggressive as other players. Although I understood how the game was played—the rules and the plays—I didn't always know how to communicate with other players and other players were used to playing with each other instead of me (and didn't pass me the ball). The less I got the ball, the less I scored; the less I scored, the less the coaches thought I could score. So, it was a downward spiral until I officially didn't make the team. I was devastated when the coach told me I would not be suiting up to play on the team but was encouraged when he said he would like me to have a role with the team, perhaps as statistician. This was COVID year, so we ended up not playing all the games originally scheduled for the season. But I had a great experience learning the computer program to keep track of stats and being part of the team in my own way.

Although I had a great time serving as statistician during my sophomore year, I really wanted to play on the team. So ... I decided to go out for basketball once again junior year, hoping this time I would certainly make the basketball team. COVID restrictions were in place, so all practices included masks and other precautions. I worked really hard during all of our practices and was trying to be a great team player. During the final practice, the coach asked to see me in the PE office and I immediately thought "this is not going to be good." Just like the previous year, the coach told me I unfortunately would not be on the basketball team again. Since I did enjoy doing stats, I inquired if I could be the statistician and the coach enthusiastically agreed that being the stats guy again would be great. I traveled to games on the bus with players and enjoyed the experience. But I would rather have been playing!

I was spared having to decide whether to try out for basketball a third time my senior year. That fall, I was taking a Sports Entertainment Marketing class and the athletic director stopped by class, asking if anyone was interested in running the video board and sound system for boys basketball games. I enthusiastically said yes and learned how to manage the system. I was in charge of the video board and music for the boys' home games that basketball season and had a blast. Instead of just watching the games and recording stats, I was now actually contributing to the entertainment. I received an award for "Best Pregame DJ" that year, quite an accomplishment for the teenager who as a preschooler would cover his ears with his hands and scream if the music was too loud!

Sports were an important part of my life growing up and were key to finding my way in a world that at times seemed scary and confusing. I owe a huge thank-you to teachers and coaches who recognized my strengths, encouraged me to work hard, and provided unique opportunities (such as writing this chapter). These people inspired me, helped me stay upbeat, and made a positive impact in shaping the young adult I have become.

19

"I REALIZE HOW UTTERLY ABSURD MY PE EXPERIENCE WAS"

Chelsey Baker

If I asked my students what their favorite subject is, I would guess about nine out of ten of them would say PE. To put it into perspective they are all five years old and love being active, so I can't fault them there. They are also all able-bodied, but as a disabled kid in school I dreaded PE class. Reflecting upon my experiences as a student in PE classes has been an interesting journey. PE was one of those things I just accepted for what it was ... something I couldn't do. There seemed to be a lot of those things I couldn't do, and my feelings were pretty indifferent. It wasn't until much later in life that those feelings evolved into thoughts of "that totally wasn't okay" and "seems like they didn't even try."

Being born with Spinal Muscular Atrophy, disability was all I ever knew, and it felt very normal. I had no idea what it was like to walk. I got my first power wheelchair in first grade, and I thought it was the coolest thing ever. The independence I gained opened up doors to so many new experiences and opportunities and yet there were still so many things I missed out on. My mother is my role model in so many ways, and she taught me to be the advocate that I am today. She recognized what I could do instead of what I couldn't, and she was a force to be reckoned with—as you'll read below—when I reached school age and entered my local public school system.

Growing up in small town Tennessee presented its own unique set of challenges in navigating inclusion and accessibility in a rural public school system that had never experienced a student with Muscular Dystrophy in a wheelchair. From the get go, my mom (rightfully) pushed me out of special education preschool and into a general education setting with accommodations. A majority of my PE classes in elementary school consisted of me sitting off to the side observing my peers. I remember seeing them ride

around on scooters, play various sports, and hula hoop. Sometimes my aide that was with me all day or a peer would throw a soft ball back and forth with me, and I recall being pretty excited those days.

I had an amazing PE teacher, and I feel that she genuinely wanted to include me but just didn't know how. She always made sure that I had some peers to keep me company or do an alternative activity with me, but it was in no way an inclusive experience. PE could've been better in a multitude of ways, but generally speaking, I just wish the activities were modified to be inclusive of me. It felt strange because I played softball with modifications on a regular team with able-bodied peers at the local ball league, and I couldn't understand why I was so restricted at school.

I think the biggest challenge during elementary school was that I literally couldn't access the playground. The playground was covered with pea gravel which is the equivalent of quicksand for a wheelchair user, so I stayed on the concrete path or did laps around the path with my friends. I remember that one day my aide took me out of my chair and carried me to the merry-go-round. I was extremely nervous and fought her every step of the way. I'm so thankful that she pushed me out of my comfort zone because that was one of the most fun days I had, and the memory has stuck with me all this time.

Middle school is arguably one of the hardest times in a kid's life, filled with so many changes and lots of feelings and 13-year-old drama. School got way more serious, and that included PE class. Everyone had to participate in regular fitness testing, well everyone except me. It was always extremely awkward watching everyone do as many sit-ups and push-ups as they could while I sat there twiddling my thumbs. I always wondered how I managed to get an "A" in that class, but as a kid hyper focused on achieving straight A's it didn't bother me too much. Again, the PE teachers were genuinely nice but didn't seem to know what to do with me. My mom got fed up pretty quickly and insisted they make a plan for me. They opted to have me bring in tabletop board games to play with a peer during PE class, but it didn't last long. They started to complain that my peers were missing out on important education. Interestingly, there was a lack of concern about my educational experience. It again turned into 45 minutes of watching my peers do various activities, and I began to feel like a burden to my teachers and my peers. Every day would be set up in stations of basketball, Four Square, and volleyball, and I would just rotate around with my friends and chat with them from the sidelines. I remember one time my friends were playing volleyball and we really wanted to hang out, so they told me to come sit on their side of the net. Suddenly a ball was coming at me extremely fast and with no time to react it whacked me in the face. Needless to say, that was the last time I did that. During the warm months, we were allowed to go outside, and we could walk the track if we didn't want to play kickball. I cherished those days just being able to hang

out with my friends and circle the track with them while they walked. It was an activity I could actually participate in like everyone else.

In high school, PE didn't even exist for me. I'm still not quite sure whose decision it was, but when I was signing up for classes, all the freshmen had to take PE, and the guidance counselor told me to pick keyboarding or personal finance. It was an immediate relief to not have to sit through the awkward "What do we do with Chelsey?" moments and having to sit on the sidelines. Fast forward to senior year, and it became a huge issue. The staff realized that graduation requirements included PE and although I was an honors student taking AP classes, they wouldn't be able to give me a regular diploma. Naturally, my mom and I fought that one as I was college bound and needed that high school diploma. I'm still not sure how they corrected that mistake, but I was granted my diploma in the end.

Now that I'm grown and have a teaching degree of my own, I realize how utterly absurd my PE experience was. There was a clear lack of effort to modify anything, and I was excluded from an education that I had a right to. I learned a lot about adaptive PE in my teacher preparation program, and I had no clue something like adaptive PE even existed. As I moved into my student teaching I got to see a period of adapted PE, and my heart was overjoyed to see students of all different levels of ability participating in sports and other activities in a fun and meaningful way. I was quite jealous that I didn't get that same experience. I loved playing softball in my local league while my physical abilities allowed me to do so, and I know I would've loved doing activities with my peers in PE at school. It made me reflect a lot, and I realized I had very indifferent feelings about PE because I didn't know there was this alternative way I could participate. I went my entire educational career just assuming I couldn't do PE. Attending a university with adaptive sports programs and adaptive equipment in the gyms, I realized that physical fitness is something that everyone can do. It elicited feelings of anger and injustice, but as I do, I made it a part of my mission to educate others on ability and ensure that everyone has access to PE. As an educator, I urge all PE teachers out there to make inclusive practices a priority and to assess ability in order to create meaningful activities for those in the class with a disability. I hope that my experiences can be learned from to make better experiences for students in the future.

20

PEER TUTORS ARE PE FRIENDS

Savannah Love

- Savannah Love:* I'm 16. I love Pokémon, and I'm also a big fan of Taylor Swift and also a big fan of Harry Potter also.
- Project Coordinator¹ (PC):* That's awesome. Well, please tell me a little about your PE experiences growing up.
- Savannah Love:* I love playing Just Dance.
- PC:* Just Dance? Do you get to do that in PE?
- Savannah Love:* Yep.
- PC:* And who's your PE teacher?
- Savannah Love:* Coach Harry.²
- PC:* And so, do you go to PE every day?
- Savannah Love:* Only on "A" days. First period. We do [Just Dance] for free time and some fun, but all the time we always do notes.³
- PC:* Oh, and what do you think about the notes?
- Savannah Love:* It was kind of a little bit boring.
- PC:* Yeah. What are some of the things you take notes about?
- Savannah Love:* I don't remember.
- PC:* A lot of complicated stuff, huh?
- Savannah Love:* Yeah.
- PC:* Tell me some more about your PE class.
- Savannah Love:* I have a peer tutor with me.
- PC:* Oh, cool. And how do you like having a peer tutor with you?
- Savannah Love:* Lots of fun.
- PC:* Do they help make successful for you?



FIGURE 20.1 Drawing of Savannah playing Just Dance in physical education.

Savannah Love: Yeah. [They] help me write the notes. I can't see the lines on the paper, and I can't see the word. The words are too tiny on the paper.

PC: What else does the peer tutor help you with?

Savannah Love: We have fun also. The first tutor in 2023, I had Ron. But now I have Taylor. Ron, he never played Just Dance with me, he needs to have some fun, but Taylor did.

PC: Does it make it more fun for you when other people are playing Just Dance with you?

Savannah Love: Yeah.

PC: What about some of the other activities in PE?

Savannah Love: We always have tournaments, like the soccer ball tournament, the basketball tournament. The last one is the track meet one.⁴

PC: And so, do you practice for those activities in PE?

Savannah Love: Yeah.

PC: And what do you think of those? Are they fun?

Savannah Love: Yeah. And also with a soccer ball tournament, I had to use an alarm ball. It's got an alarm clock but, in the ball, it's called a beeper ball, or a bell ball.

PC: That makes the soccer game better for you?

Savannah Love: Yeah. Same with the basketball tournament also.

PC: That's cool. And so, did that help make the tournament more fun for you?

Savannah Love: Yeah. [Because] I really can't see. I'm color blind. The colors would be kind of hard for me to stand out. I can't see colors going in or I usually mess up green and blue. Also, I really can't see net of the basketball hoops.⁵

PC: So those are just hard for you to see. So how do you play?

Savannah Love: My PE coach, he attached hula hoops to it, some colored ones.

PC: He adjusted the game a little bit to make it so it's better for you?

Savannah Love: Yeah. I still can't see the basket part of the hoop, the net part of the hoop. The net or the basket part is white, the wall will be white also. It would be camouflage.

PC: Ah, that makes sense. What else do you do in high school PE?

Savannah Love: We did some weightlifting. I think it's fun, but I still don't like weights. My spine hurts a lot. I'm about to get another spine surgery.

PC: So, you have another surgery coming up. And so, does your back and your spine hurt all the time or do you think weights makes it hurt more?

Savannah Love: Only I stand up too long or sitting too long. It's spinal stenosis.

Mom: A degenerative disease.

Savannah Love: It's just hard for me. Spinal stenosis is a hard one for me to say.

PC: It's hard for me to say too. And so, with your spinal stenosis, does that make certain other activities hard for you to play?

Savannah Love: Not Just Dance. Well, the track meet part, my spine was hurting. I had to have a break.⁶

PC: So, your PE teacher lets you have breaks so you didn't have to do the activities when you were feeling sore?

Savannah Love: Yeah.

PC: That's good. It sounds like it would be hard to participate in a track practice when you were feeling sore. Let's talk a

- little bit about middle school PE. Do you remember middle school PE at all?
- Savannah Love:* [I was in] Ms. McGonagall's class.
- PC:* And so, what do you remember about her class?
- Savannah Love:* I also got a peer tutor also in Ms. McGonagall's class also.
- PC:* So, the peer tutoring has been helpful for you in middle school and high school, it sounds like.
- Savannah Love:* Yeah. And also, one of the new sophomores in my class from the other middle school was asking me questions about my vision. He asked me about my vision and if I was blind. I told him, "Yes and I can't see tiny words, I have night blindness, color-blindness, and tunnel vision," and I told him why I use my cane. I told him I use it to go around stuff.
- PC:* Do you like when your friends get to take classes with you? We are back to talking about high school PE now, correct?
- Savannah Love:* Yeah. Most of my friends from Ms. Sprout's class and also all of them from Ms. Perry's class. And also, everyone's peer tutors.
- PC:* Did you ever do any things that were really hard for you in PE?
- Savannah Love:* No, not in high school.
- PC:* In high school it's been a really good experience, huh?
- Savannah Love:* Yes, but the running part. I always just walk. It's good walking than running.
- PC:* It sounds like your teachers do a really good job of meeting your needs and letting you be involved as you're able to.
- Savannah Love:* And also, one time the PE teacher did a no vision game. It's a kind of ball game, I think, but you have to be blind for that one.
- Mom:* Goalball.
- PC:* So, your whole class played a Goalball game?
- Savannah Love:* They had to be blindfolded. It was really good. They had to be blindfolded.
- PC:* How did you feel about that game?
- Savannah Love:* It was fun. They could see. They do have the vision, but they have to be blindfolded for the game.
- PC:* And do you think that made it harder for them?
- Savannah Love:* Yeah. (Laughing)
- PC:* Was it kind of funny for you because it was harder for them?

- Savannah Love:* Yeah. Not hard with me.
- PC:* Have you had experiences practicing Goalball before?
- Savannah Love:* I don't ... maybe, yeah. One time we did pickleball.
- PC:* Oh, pickleball. How did that go?
- Savannah Love:* Good. My friend, Hermione, she helped me. Taylor is my peer tutor for now. In January, the peer tutors change. But Hermione, she was just a friend. She wasn't my peer tutor anymore.
- PC:* How did Hermione help you?
- Savannah Love:* Being like, help me know how to [use the paddle]. I am not good. I easily miss it.
- PC:* How do you think pickleball would've gone without her?
- Savannah Love:* It was hard. It would be hard.
- PC:* We are winding down our conversation now. Before we finish, is there anything else you want to share about your PE experiences?
- Savannah Love:* I really like just playing Just Dance.
- PC:* How often do you get to play Just Dance?
- Savannah Love:* A lot of times.
- PC:* And what are the other kids doing in the class when you're playing Just Dance? Or, are they all playing Just Dance?
- Savannah Love:* They're playing Just Dance also. Actually, some people, most of them were playing basketball or volleyball.
- PC:* So, you have three different games going on at once, volleyball, basketball, and Just Dance?
- Savannah Love:* Yeah. I had to have the bell ones [to play] basketball or volleyball. It's just the bell basketball was flat, but I can't find how to blow it back up.
- PC:* You'll have to bug your coaches and say, "Hey, you need to find your pump and pump that ball back up for me."
- Savannah Love:* And patch it up. There's a hole in it, patch it up.

Notes

- 1 Paul Warner, who served as our project coordinator, facilitated this conversation. We should also note that Paul was Savannah's adapted physical education teacher during the 2018–19 academic year. Because of this connection, Savannah felt comfortable sharing her stories described here.
- 2 All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.
- 3 These "notes" refer to curricular content (e.g., fitness concepts) and occur at the start of each class before beginning physical activities and gameplay. Savannah says these are "to learn about weights, muscles, the heart, blood, and other health-related things."

- 4 “This year (2024), they’ve added volleyball. These are called Unified Sports. We’ve already finished that. My peer tutors are sometimes my sighted guides for Unified Sports. I love getting to see all my friends.”
- 5 “Now, I can see lights better, but lots of things look like different shades and shadows. The rim looks like darker shadows.”
- 6 “When I get to be feeling better, then I join back in.”

21

“FORCED INCLUSION”

Inclusion Looks Different for Everyone

Nora Cizik

Nora Cizik: I'm just drawing people in the gym. Now, we're supposed to be doing the warmup. No, not me. I'm just usually sitting. Well, I don't know. Am I going to draw us doing the warmup? No, I'm going to draw me in gym.

Editor: I noticed that you drew yourself over on the side of the gym.

Nora Cizik: I just wouldn't participate, usually. Then Miles¹ would sometimes try to join me, and sit with me, and engage, because he'd think I'm lonely or he'd want to be with me, because it's easier to hang out with me and talk than to do gym, which I can totally understand.

Editor: So, is this drawing of PE class with a bunch of other students?

Nora Cizik: Mm-hmm. Including my classmates that are in my SPED class. We usually do it together.

Editor: Are there also kids that are not in your SPED class?

Nora Cizik: Mm-hmm. And then we usually have a para in there to help us, usually.

Editor: So how many students from your SPED class do you say are in that class?

Nora Cizik: Just the eighth graders [who had PE last semester]. The seventh graders are doing [PE] this semester, which I'm hearing very mixed reviews. I think our new gym teacher is not the most liked amongst us SPED kids. Well, our old gym teacher, I think she was a people pleaser, which, it probably explains why she's fired. I think she had no clue what she was doing.

Editor: Your old PE teacher was fired?



FIGURE 21.1 Drawing of Nora C. sitting on the sidelines during middle school physical education class.

Nora Cizik: We all assume. They won't tell us. She's just not here this year. And we have a new guy [a gym teacher], who all the teachers like, which I can see why. He's a good teacher. But yeah, [he's] not liked among the SPED students. He's a little strict. I think that's because last year we didn't really have a para. I think this year because we have our para in our classroom, and we all like him, but he definitely is a, "Participate." But I'm like, "We always would sit out, usually." And I think he's like, "I know, you're participating." So, I think that makes us like him less, because he's just carrying out what [the gym teacher] tells us to do, more. What I am trying to say is I wish the para would engage with us more in gym as SPED students or help the non-SPED students engage with us the SPED students.

[The gym teacher is] with the seventh graders, which so far, they're not happy. And I said, "That's probably because you have a [new] gym teacher, and he's never worked with SPED students." Because when we had Ms. Deborah (a para), she didn't really force us to do gym if we didn't want to. She's like,

"Try your best." But it was also, we sat out a lot, me, and Miles, and Laura did. I would try to get Miles to participate, but he would sit out if I would sit out, which was a problem, because I didn't want to participate. Miles would [participate] if he was forced to.

[The paras] were help. Usually, Ms. Deborah would help. Her son was in gym when we were in gym, but none of us really liked him. I liked him, but no one else did. He's okay. And so, I think then the gym teacher, because [Ms. Deborah's son] wants to participate, will force students to play with him, which, towards the end of when we were in our gym semester, he would do a lot of forcing students when we'd play games or something, to include him, which I'm like, "No." I don't always believe in forced inclusion with peers. I think that encourages other typically developing students to have annoying behavior.

Editor: Forced inclusion, what do you mean by that?

Nora Cizik: Like when typically developing, non-SPED students are excluding someone, and the teacher forces the SPED student to play in their group even though they don't want him to.²

Editor: So, the students don't want the student with the disability to play with them?

Nora Cizik: Yeah. But usually, the SPED students can be pretty okay with it. But you could tell there was a lot of, "If we had the choice, we prefer not to. We're doing it [to be] nice, but we don't really." Which I understand. He's interesting. I understand, he's a little interesting, which is always a problem. I've learned that when you're high functioning, that's always hard. Because like Miles, he's my friend. He's not really that high functioning enough to really be that ... Well, he's still cognitive, but not enough where people do certain things, which is easy, and it's helpful, like when they pass the ball or help him play the game, because he'll try to be close or do certain things, which are normal behaviors for him. It's been hard when you have to do this, encourage normal behaviors, which usually we can do in the classroom, because those are okay, and he could still do work when students help him. That's harder when redirecting and telling someone something when they're high functioning enough to know you're not treating them like a normal peer, which is always interesting.

Editor: So that's for students in your class that need more help?

Nora Cizik: Mm-hmm. Like Miles, who, usually people interact with him very well except for the babying but that's, I think only certain

students do that. You can tell who actually likes hanging out with Miles based on how they treat him.

Editor: So, this phrase forced inclusion, where did you hear this?

Nora Cizik: I came up with it. Like when the teacher tells you, "Sharing is caring." That's like, "We don't want him. We're not trying to be rude, but we don't want the person to play with us." You know? And the teacher said, "You have to. Sharing's caring," or whatever.

Editor: So how do you think that makes students like Miles feel?

Nora Cizik: He's usually okay because he has autism, and he's more on the spectrum than I am, which I think he just lives in his own bubble, not totally, but I think, not to be rude to my friend or anything, but I don't think he's totally socially aware enough to notice it. But I think, then, when it's for people like me or Timothy [it's different].

But then for someone like Miles, it's always easier to redirect behaviors or try to include him, because he doesn't really know any better, no offense to him. But then someone like Timothy, who is socially aware, that makes it a lot harder, because he's aware that you're excluding him or treating him differently, which they usually don't as much with Miles. But sometimes he can be a bit much to handle on his bad days, which I understand that sometimes he can be a bit much to handle. I respect that. I sometimes can be a much to handle, my mom thinks.

Editor: Let's talk more about your current PE teacher. You said he's a little bit stricter?

Nora Cizik: I know Caleb and me weren't a big fan of him. He's nice. And then I don't really know how the seventh graders think of him. I just know that some of them don't really like him.

We have our para, which he obviously forces you to do stuff you don't want to, which I know is good for somebody to push you when you don't want to do something, but you know can, you know? What's the word he likes to use? Not taking advantage of being in SPED? Well, I don't know. It's cooler when he says it because he phrases it really fun, and it makes sense. But like, "You don't take advantage of, 'I'm in SPED, so I don't have to participate.'" I think gym's hard, because the para did one time, which I liked, he got a big beach ball out. But I think that was after our [gym] teacher pushed for the para, because me and my friends generally just sit and do word searches or, you know, just talk. It really helped when the PE

teacher guided an activity the SPED students and non-SPED students could enjoy together.

I know I would sit there, which I think Miles would want to be with me, because we're friends, and he would like to play with me, because I like to play with him. And that was always fun. And Caleb sometimes would participate or sit out. It really depended on friends. I think Miles just doesn't [like] gym in general, so it's a no go, which I understand. It's like, "No," if I have the choice and I don't think he was a real "force you to participate," which was like, we'd just sit there and wait for gym to be over. [The gym teacher] doesn't really care what we do.

Editor: So how often do you find yourself sitting on the sidelines?

Nora Cizik: Well, a lot of times. Or the one time we were doing volleyball, balls were flying, so he understood, and so we sat out because I didn't want to get hit by a ball. And then I think I started using that as an excuse, he didn't really know. And last year I don't even really remember. I just remember it was also a little bit of a test because we didn't have a good SPED teacher, but that's a whole other conversation for another day. But yeah, I think it was a lot harder. And can you give me three copies [of this book] so I can give one to both my gym teachers? Well, especially my one gym teacher, not my other one. He's nice.

And so, it got chaotic. It was like, "Ball here, ball there." And so, I think as we got into other things I probably could have participated, and I just avoided. Because then it would be like, "Partner up with a friend. Partner." And I'm like, "Yeah, that doesn't really work." Well, I would partner up with my one friend sometimes, but that sometimes was hard, because she has some special needs, too. And so, my one friend, she'd always joke that ... What was it? She'd always said it and it made a lot of sense, actually. Oh yeah, I know. She'd always say, "Don't put two autistic kids in the room together. That always ends ..." No. She says it really rude. I'm trying to remember. She phrased it really funny. She used to say, "Don't put a high functioning and a low functioning special needs kid in a room together." I'm just making a comment that some people usually can do more things than others if you know what I mean. Like my friend, he's a little more, not as socially aware as I am. But then he is really good at science. So, everyone has their own perks. But as my friend would say, she'd always say, "Don't put two of them together because it disrupts."

But it was a lot of me just sitting and me telling Miles to try to go play. And I'm like, "Do the warmup." And I just didn't want to do gym, period. And so that made it hard for me to try to be a good friend, because when I know there was this one kid, a typically developing non-SPED student, who was really nice to Miles, he always be like, "Watch me. Let's do the warmup together. Let's copy," instead of calling them rock climbers or whatever, he'd be like, "Let's do push-ups. Pretend like you're holding a rock," to make it engaging for him, which was nice.

Editor: You mentioned that you did a lot of partner work. How'd you feel about doing partner work in PE class?

Nora Cizik: Well, I know in our other semester we'd dribble balls as a group, but it'd be like we were doing some game where we'd bounce balls and stuff, and we'd watch a video, and then do the activity. But it would be a lot of, "Get in a group." And I'm like, "Well." Our one friend, he tried to get in a group because I think he's also, there's a whole topic of he's totally not coherent, and we try to include him, which is always a problem, because he's neither, he's that odd duck where he's neither special needs enough to be in the group, [but he's] in their SPED classroom. But then he's also coherent enough that he wants to be with the general ed kids. But then it's also hard, because he's the odd duck. So, he never fits in either category. So, it's hard.

That's always hard, because our one friend, Timothy, it's hard for us to include him than others, because he's neither. He's just the odd duck because he neither is, "Great. You're high functioning enough" and so, then engage with [nondisabled students] ... but then he's too low functioning, like atypical or whatever you would call that term. And so that makes it hard for him to engage with either group. So yeah, it was always an odd dynamic.

Editor: What group do you see yourself fitting in?

Nora Cizik: I usually hang out with a lot of my SPED students, which sometimes I'll engage with my typical peers, which it's always tricky how they interact. Because I'll hang out with people. As you get older, friends usually push you away, because I've learned the hard way you don't develop as fast as your peers. You don't want to hang out with other people who you used to hang out and be really close with, just because people like me and Miles, we just don't really mature as fast, as you can see with my loads of stuffies, some of us don't really mature as fast as our typical peers.

Editor: Let's get back to talking about PE. It sounds like you're not particularly excited about participating?

Nora Cizik: I'm excited I'm not going to even have to deal with gym next year, because I'm going to get my gym credit here,³ hopefully. Yeah, we're looking into that. Yeah, next year I won't even have to deal with a gym teacher, which will hopefully make me happy if we can get it figured out.

Editor: Why is that something that you want to do?

Nora Cizik: I'm just like, "No, I don't really like gym in general. Why don't I pick something I like to do? I like U-FIT, or doing other outside activities, like Unified Sports or Adaptive Recreation Programs, [and think] ooh, I can get my gym credit." But they said, "As long as they have physical recorded credit that somebody checks off, that I was here for this long, doing this much, you know, heart rate." Blah, blah, blah, blah.

Yeah, I was going to do dance [instead of PE], but then it's like the popular kids or whatever. And I know the dance teacher has been trying to do that. But I know if you take Dance 1, it's a lot easier. But then it's like the popular kids all trying to sign up. And so, I know there's that whole thing, which [the dance teacher's] been trying to get out of, which is like, "I can't really, because they all sign up and I can't prevent you from not signing up or signing up." But I know that, which I was going to sign up for dance, but I'm kind of disappointed I didn't.

Editor: You didn't want to be with popular kids?

Nora Cizik: Yeah, they're annoying. But that's just basic. Yeah. Basically, just the basic school drama. I don't want to be with the popular kids, just basic, typical developing school [friends] and all.

I don't really use "typical," as they are probably more appropriate, correct [words]. So, I don't even like using that word. Miles, it makes him really mad. But then he uses all the time when he's mad. I'm like, "Hm. Yeah." Because he doesn't like using those sorts of terms or whatever. But I don't know. That's tricky. There's not really a good [term] for normal and not normal, because that's even worse. I don't know. We need to come up with a...there are so many different terms, you could literally look up.

Editor: How would you describe yourself?

Nora Cizik: I don't know, but it's because there are so many terms. It's timeline. I have no idea because there are so many terms. I don't like any of terms that are out there, but they're really funny. Term, normal, not normal, normal, this, that. And I'm like,

“Wow, it’s just gone from atypical, not typical, atypical, this, that.” I’m like, “What? It’s not really changed, it’s just for long it was normal, not normal, it’s definitely not special needs.” And I was like, “Wow, we have not really come up with a good term for this.” I don’t know. What people usually use, I know science-wise, because I like reading science articles, usually “typical” or “atypical.” I know that’s huge what mostly is used now. I don’t know. I just usually special needs, not special needs, which is probably not the most coherent. I don’t even like it because everyone gets mad when I use it, but that’s how I identify. I think I’m just so gray using it. Once you form the habit, you can’t really undo the bad habit.

Editor: Let’s circle back to PE. If you could tell your PE teacher anything you wanted, what would you say?

Nora Cizik: [There’s a] difference between “you’re being forced to engage” and “here’s how you’re going to make them want to engage on their own,” not forced engagement. I’d just say, “Here. Here’s somebody (an APE teacher) who can tell you what to do, who would definitely change it to make me like your gym class.”

Notes

- 1 All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.
- 2 Nora Cizik has provided an addendum elaborating on forced inclusion: “forcing typically developing kids who are vocal in their words, attitudes and actions to play/include special education students. Because for students like me (who are higher functioning), I could tell they were being forced and that made it uncomfortable for me.”
- 3 Editor’s note: Nora is referring to U-FIT, an adapted physical activity program held at the University of Utah.

22

OUR REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Justin A. Haegele and Wesley J. Wilson

Why write a reflection and conclusion chapter for a book of this nature, where our stated and inherent goal was to center the voices of the storyteller over nondisabled faculty members? Does this exercise conflict or create tension with what we sought to do? These both might be true here, and therefore if you, as the reader, find yourself electing to drift away from this chapter, and rather to focus on the stories of our authors, we would not blame you. In fact, we would support this behavior. With this in mind, though, we elected to include a final chapter to provide some ideas for readers to think about and reflect on after consuming this book, as well as share more formal understandings of ableism that might help with those reflections.

In this book, we endeavored to construct a case-based learning resource for pre-service physical education teachers, as well as those training to become adapted physical educators and special educators, to help them think about and engage with the voices and perspectives of disabled people regarding what physical education looks and feels like for them. To do so, we elicited the help of 18 people to author stories about their personal and lived experiences within physical education. These stories, which were presented through storytelling, conversations, drawings, and open letters to physical educators, help share with readers intimate particularities of the good, bad, and ugly sides of physical education for disabled people from their own words. As the editors of this text, we must acknowledge the commitment and vulnerability of these authors, and thank them for sharing their personal and intimate experiences for others to learn from, think about, and reflect on. *Thank you.*

As readers of these chapters, it is now time for you to think about and reflect on the stories and consider what they might mean for you as (future)

educators. This may include considering how these stories might shape your pedagogical decisions, your strategies and perspectives toward behavior management, or the way you interact with disabled students and their families. As we discussed in Chapter 2, an initial charge is for you to consider your own biases as teachers and think about how such biases may influence the way you engage with the stories shared within this resource. For example, how do you feel, and what do you think about, when reading stories about disabled students learning through physical education that they are incapable, rather than capable, and the detrimental outcomes that might be associated with that? Shouldn't this create some sort of tension for the reader, who, as a preservice teacher, should value physical education highly and believe in its inherent benefits? Further, if you think that integrated physical education is inherently good, and read stories suggesting negative experiences within these contexts, how do you reconcile that tension between your beliefs and these authors' stories, when it appears that this physical education space is what disables the student? Or, on the other hand, if you believe disabled people should be taught only in self-contained settings, but see the value of integrated education in these stories, how do you settle this dispute? Of course, these questions should be at least somewhat paradoxical, as the space or place in which physical education is provided is not (or should not) be reduced to two predetermined locations. Nonetheless, thinking about and embracing these tensions between our personal biases as educators and the stories and voices of the authors within this text is an important way for us to propel our thinking about teaching forward.

Throughout Chapters 1 and 2, we briefly mention concepts related to ableism, and how ableist views can inform behaviors leading to unintentional harm (Peers et al., 2023). In the following section, we circle back to these topics and share more deeply about concepts related to ableism and unintentional harm, to further assist with exploring how our biases and perspectives may influence the ways we interact with disabled students, as well as how one might engage with the stories within this text. We would be remiss, though, not to remind you of the reflective questions provided within Chapter 2, and to encourage you to revisit these questions now that you've read the stories throughout this book. For convenience, we have copied below the reflection questions, which are not, of course, meant to be prescriptive. That is, you should not be or feel limited in your ability to think more broadly about the stories. Rather, these can act as a basic starting point to develop reflective thinking:

- What do I think about this story and why do I think this way?
- How do I feel when reading this story and why do I feel this way?
- How does this story resonate with my personal experiences in physical education?

- What do I think the author wants me to know about their experiences and how may it inform my (future) practice as an educator?
- Are there any themes that seem to reoccur across multiple chapters?

Ableism

In constructing this chapter focused on reflections, we thought deeply as editors about what content we should share that can help readers think further about their biases and how these biases may, or may not, influence their interpretations of these stories. In doing so, it became clear to us that sharing content about ableism, and encouraging readers to consider how their reflections may be influenced by ableist thinking, is both contemporary and appropriate.

Like sexism, racism, and homophobia, ableism supports the concept of the ideal body, as well as the exclusion or restriction of certain groups of people based on their real or perceived ability, and constructs ideals of disabled people being less able, abnormal, or undesirable (Campbell, 2009; Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2013). Indeed, Smith and colleagues (2021) defined ableism as a form of prejudice and discrimination in which nondisabled people are viewed as superior, or “normal,” and disabled people are viewed as inferior or “abnormal.” Importantly, ableism includes both ideologies and technologies, representing both beliefs about who has value as well as processes and actions that put these values into practice (Peers et al., 2023). For disabled people, then, “ableism can be an omnipresent force where public space and built environments serve as constant reminder to a lack of consideration of their existence” (Arroyo-Rojas et al., 2023, p. 121). Here, conceptually we know what ableism is, but how does it look?

Ableism can take on a number of different forms. For example, *direct ableism* includes overt and conscious behaviors that purposely and maliciously act to dehumanize disabled people (Wayland et al., 2021). Also referred to as *asshole ableism* by the website disabilitythinking.com, this type of ableism can include nondisabled people complaining about disabled people receiving special privileges or benefits, suspecting disabled people fake impairment to receive special attention, or overprotecting or sheltering disabled youth because of perceptions of inability (Haegele, 2022). *Normalized ableism* refers to unconscious behavior that is not intended to cause harm, but does (Wayland et al., 2021). This type of ableism, which has been referred to as well-being ableism, indirect ableism, or ignorant ableism, tends to take the form of verbal expressions that communicate insults or slights concerning impairment (perhaps, unintentionally). Some examples that are particularly relevant to physical education spaces can include the “sit less, stand more” trope, which communicates that disability is a problem that needs to be fixed (Smith et al., 2021). *Enlightened ableism*, a concept we briefly mentioned

in Chapter 1, is a potentially related concept which also centers on unintentional harm. According to Lyons (2013), enlightened ableism occurs when nondisabled people engage in rhetoric presenting a rational and well-informed view of the world, yet still allow for the continuation of practices that marginalize disabled people. Highlighting this, Peers and colleagues (2023) offered that it is possible that

people can be doing entirely well-meaning work around inclusion and empowerment, and still help to reproduce a world in which disabled people are devalued and excluded because they do not live up to the supremacist, ableist expectations of bodies, minds, and capacities.

(p. 37)

Conversations about ableism have now made their way into kinesiology as a broad field (Arroyo-Rojas et al., 2023; Ball & Haegele, 2024; Depauw, 2023; Peers et al., 2023), and physical education more specifically (Alves et al., 2024; Arroyo-Rojas, 2024; Giese et al., 2023; Lynch et al., 2023), and have helped us to understand further how disabled people are discussed and treated within these spaces, as well as the unintentional harm that may be associated with it. Within this line of scholarship, scholars have begun to problematize the way in which ableism informs higher education training in physical education (Lynch et al., 2023), physical education practices such as the use of normative motor assessments (Giese et al., 2023) and curriculum development (Mihajlovic, 2019), as well as ideologies associated with inclusion (Alves et al., 2024). To learn more about this area specific to physical education, we encourage you to delve deeper into the work of scholars like Maria Luiza Tanure Alves, Martin Giese, Fabian Arroyo-Rojas, among others, who are consistently contributing to this literature.

For our part, it is our genuine hope that this case-based learning resource does not perpetuate ableist thinking. While traditional approaches to case-based learning lean heavily toward being a useful tool in a teacher educator's training repertoire (Hemphill et al., 2015), applying that very perspective undermines the intent of elevating the authors' embodied knowledge and ways of being in physical education spaces. It would be problematic if the stories—the lived experiences—of these authors were relegated to simply being tools with the primary purpose of enriching the learning of the readers (Naturkach & Goodwin, 2019). This ableist notion, that the value of the disabled authors' words extends only as far as it helps educate nondisabled preservice teachers, forced us to reframe our take on case-based learning (see Chapter 2). For this reason, we stressed the importance at the beginning of this book, and here, at its end, to value these stories not as tools for learning, but as ways to engage meaningfully in critical introspection and discourse about what you have read.

Collectively, this section provides a conceptually dense explanation of ableism, and points readers in the direction of further resources to explore related concepts. Armed with this information, we would hope that readers can explore their biases and their interpretations of the stories that were shared throughout the book, and determine if their beliefs are in danger of being rooted in ableism. That is, you should feel encouraged to be vulnerable when reflecting about your behavior and thinking, as authors in this collection were vulnerable in sharing their stories, and ask yourself if you believe your behaviors were informed or driven by ableist thoughts. Without this vulnerability, we are surely in danger of continuing to perpetuate ableist ideas through processes of enlightened ableism where we express a value for disabled people while simultaneously devaluing them through our behavior.

Final Thoughts

It appears unfair for us, as the editors of this book, to have the final say or provide the final thoughts. However, we suppose this is the role of an “editor” in a collection of this nature. With that, instead of a verbose or winding conclusion to the book, we again would encourage you to engage with the stories of these authors, and to consider how learning from them can be helpful to you. Perhaps spending time to think about the connectedness between stories, and how different salient features, such as when authors describe the point of being (in)capable within physical education, would be a worthwhile exercise. But as we have repetitively said throughout our authored chapters of this book, we must center the voices of the authors and decentralize our nondisabled, academic voices and perspectives. To speak over the authors would, again, be an exercise in enlightened ableism where we are thinking about and communicating positive expectations while simultaneously continuing to silence them. Or, perhaps more problematically, to overinterpret their stories could be reminiscent of forms of epistemic injustice, such as *testimonial injustice*, where disabled individuals’ knowledge is devalued or discredited (Fricker, 2017), or exercises of *disability ventriloquism*, where their voices are *used* by nondisabled scholars simply to support or perpetuate points related to the latter’s own agenda. With that, we hope that you have found your reading and reflection on these stories to be meaningful, and to help deconstruct what existing ableist notions may exist for you.

References

- Alves, M. L. T., van Munster, M. A., dos Santos Alves, I., & Viana de Souza, J. (2024). The “normal” physical education classes: The ableism facing the inclusion of disabled students. *Disability & Society*, 39(2), 469–484.
- Arroyo-Rojas, F. (2024). Unpacking ableism: Perspectives from the Chilean physical education discourse. *Kinesiology Review*, 13(3), 376–382.

- Arroyo-Rojas, F., Simpson, A. C., Laxton, P., Leake, M., Linker, J., & Haegele, J. A. (2023). Ableism in kinesiology in higher education: A conversation starter. *Kinesiology Review*, 12(2), 120–126.
- Ball, L. E., & Haegele, J. A. (2024). Examining ableism through the physical activity experiences of blind and visually impaired women. *Journal of Physical Activity & Health*, 21(7), 683–691.
- Campbell, F. K. (2009). *Contours of ableism: Ableism and technologies of disability production*. Queensland University of Technology.
- Depauw, K. P. (2023). Adapted physical activity scholarship. Evolving from corrective to inclusion and anti-ableist. *Kinesiology Review*, 13(1), 76–84.
- Fricker, M. (2017). Evolving concepts of epistemic injustice. In *The Routledge handbook of epistemic injustice* (pp. 53–60). Routledge.
- Giese, M., Haegele, J. A., & Maher, A. J. (2023). The ableist underpinning of normative motor assessments in adapted physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 43(1), 72–78.
- Haegele, J. A. (2022). Philosophical & social considerations. In D. J. Burt & B. L. Hersman (Eds.), *Movement in special populations: Fitness, sport & physical education for individuals with disabilities* (pp. 11–24). Kendall Hunt.
- Hemphill, M. A., Richards, K. A., Gaudreault, K. L., & Templin, T. J. (2015). Pre-service teacher perspectives of case-based learning in physical education teacher education. *European Physical Education Review*, 21(4), 432–450.
- Hodge, N., & Runswick-Cole, K. (2013). “They never pass me the ball”: Exposing ableism through the leisure experiences of disabled children, young people and their families. *Children’s Geographies*, 11(3), 311–325.
- Lynch, S., Simon, M., & Maher, A. (2023). Critical pedagogies for community building: Challenging ableism in higher education physical education in the United States. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 28(1), 195–210.
- Lyons, L. (2013). Transformed understanding or enlightened ableism? The gap between policy and practice for children with disabilities in Aotearoa, New Zealand. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 45(2), 237–249.
- Mihajlovic, C. (2019). Towards inclusive education? An analysis of the current physical education curriculum in Finland from the perspective of ableism. *International Journal of Physical Education*, 56(4), 29–39.
- Naturkach, R. T. M., & Goodwin, D. L. (2019). The unheard partner in adapted physical activity community service learning. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 36(2), 264–281.
- Peers, D., Eales, L., & Goodwin, D. (2023). Disablism, ableism, and enlightened ableism in contemporary adapted physical activity textbooks: Practising what we preach? In D. Goodwin & M. Connolly (Eds.), *Reflexivity and change in adaptive physical activity* (pp. 34–46). Routledge.
- Smith, B., Mallick, K., Monforte, J., & Foster, C. (2021). Disability, the communication of physical activity and sedentary behaviour, and ableism: A call for inclusive messages. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 55(20), 1121–1122.
- Wayland, S., Smith-Merry, J., Rakidzic, S., O’Shea, A., Schqeizer, R., Gill, K., Hutton, V., & Sicko, S. (2021). Ableism. In V. Hutton & S. Sisko (Eds.), *Multicultural responsiveness in counselling and psychology* (pp. 217–239). Palgrave Macmillan.

INDEX

4K *see* preschool
504 plans 50, 118, 125

ableism 3, 60, 146–149; cerebral palsy 37; diabetes 50, 52
absenteeism 51, 75
adapted sports leagues 108–109
Americans with Disabilities Act 37
anxiety: autism 94, 119; cerebral palsy 85, 87, 88; diabetes 50; prosthetic leg 21; visual impairment 17, 18
autism 37, 89–94, 103–104, 117–127, 140

badminton 106
balance 13, 121
balance beams 84, 114
ball skills: autism 125, 142; cerebral palsy 34, 99; prosthetic leg 21, 22, 24; spinal muscular atrophy 129; transplant patient 113, 115; visual impairment 15, 16, 57; wheelchair users 74

bar, gymnastics 114
baseball: autism 90, 94, 117, 121; special needs programs 106, 109, 110; visual impairment 16, 61
basketball: autism 119, 122–126; cerebral palsy 99; diabetes 48–53; hearing impairment 65; prosthetic leg 24; spinal muscular atrophy 129; visual impairment 15–16, 17–18, 132–133, 135
beach balls 74, 140–141

bean bags 93, 99
beep baseball 16
bell balls 17
bench presses 87
Big Base 123
bike riding: autism 90–92, 120, 125; special needs programs 105
bi-skis 98
blind baseball 61, 62
blind kickball 62
blindness/visual impairment 14–19, 26–33, 57–62, 131–135
Body Mass Index (BMI) 23–24
boredom: visual impairment 15, 131; wheelchair users 69, 74, 77, 81
bowling: autism 90, 93; special needs programs 109
bowling pins 70, 71, 72
braces 69, 77
braille 26, 57, 62
bullying 103–104
burnout 50

canes 27, 57, 134
cartwheels 84, 114
case-based learning 1–3, 6–12, 145, 148
cerebral palsy 34–44, 83–88, 95–102
classic skiing 29
climbing: autism 119–120, 125; cerebral palsy 43; visual impairment 17
clothing: autism 103; cerebral palsy 100; prosthetic leg 20
college: autism 117; cerebral palsy 41–43, 85, 86–88

- color blindness 133, 134
- confidence 43; autism 121; cerebral palsy 34, 35, 96, 98; diabetes 54, 55; visual impairment 33
- core strength: autism 120, 125; cerebral palsy 39, 96
- croquet 93
- cross-country running 18
- cross-country skiing 29
- crutches 70, 71
- curl-ups 85, 120

- dancing: autism 90, 143; visual impairment 14, 27, 59, 60, 131–133, 135; wheelchair users 69
- deafness/hearing impairment 63–67, 76–82
- diabetes 45–56
- diet, and autism 118, 125
- Disability Week 22–23
- discrimination: cerebral palsy 88; diabetes 52–54; *see also* ableism
- diving 86
- dodgeball 24
- downhill skiing 14
- driver's education 101
- duck-duck-goose 118

- EduMic 64, 65–66
- elementary school: autism 91, 119–122; cerebral palsy 34–35, 83–85, 95–98; hearing impairment 63–67, 76–82; prosthetic leg 21–23; special needs programs 107, 109; spinal muscular atrophy 128–129; transplant patient 112–113; visual impairment 14–16, 26–28; wheelchair users 68–82
- embarrassment: cerebral palsy 84; diabetes 49, 51; prosthetic leg 21, 23; visual impairment 16, 58
- empowerment: ableism 148; diabetes 47, 54, 56; prosthetic leg 23
- exclusion: autism 137–143; cerebral palsy 99, 100, 101; diabetes 48, 51–55; hearing impairment 65, 66; spinal muscular atrophy 128–130; visual impairment 15, 59; wheelchair users 69, 73–74, 77; *see also* isolation

- falls 21
- Family Partnership 26
- fatigue: diabetes 50; transplant patient 113, 115
- fibromyalgia 49

- fitness tests: autism 120, 123; cerebral palsy 85, 87; prosthetic leg 23, 25; spinal muscular atrophy 129
- flag football 14, 119
- floor hockey 15, 109, 110
- footwear 24, 48
- Four Square 129
- freeze tag 67
- frisbee 93
- futsal 61, 62

- ghosts in the graveyard game 68, 71, 81–82, 90
- goalball 16, 17, 28, 61, 62, 134–135
- golf 92, 93, 122, 123
- grinch's castle game 70, 71
- gymnastics: autism 119–120; cerebral palsy 34–35, 84; transplant patient 114

- handball 58, 107, 110
- hand-eye coordination 41
- Happy Bats 121
- Head Start 118
- hearing aids 63, 79, 80
- hearing impairment 63–67, 76–82
- heart transplant 112–116
- high school: autism 90, 92–93, 125–126; cerebral palsy 37–41, 87, 100–101; diabetes 48–55; prosthetic leg 24–25; special needs programs 105–107, 109; spinal muscular atrophy 130; transplant patient 115; visual impairment 17, 18, 29–33, 58–61, 131–134
- hockey: floor 15, 109, 110; sled 110
- home schooling 26
- horseshoes 93
- hula hoops: visual impairment 133; wheelchair users 70, 72, 73

- inclusion: ableism 148; autism 90, 91, 94, 137–144; cerebral palsy 34–36, 83, 88, 95–96, 98, 99, 101; diabetes 55; forced 137–144; hearing impairment 65; prosthetic leg 23, 25; spinal muscular atrophy 128–130; transplant patient 115; visual impairment 15
- Individualized Education Plans (IEPs): autism 89, 118; cerebral palsy 40, 99, 100, 101; special needs programs 107; visual impairment 57–58, 61
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 37, 40

- injury: diabetes 51; falls 21; spinal muscular atrophy 129; visual impairment 15, 17–18
- interdisciplinary approach, cerebral palsy 99
- isolation: cerebral palsy 37; visual impairment 28; *see also* exclusion
- judo 41–43
- jumping: autism 119, 124; hearing impairment 76; prosthetic leg 22; wheelchair users 69, 73, 76–77
- jump rope 35, 119
- junior high school, and visual impairment 16–18, 28–29
- Just Dance 131–133, 135
- karate 121
- kickball: autism 90; blind 62; cerebral palsy 98, 100; prosthetic leg 24
- kindergarten *see* preschool
- knee lunges 69, 70, 73
- laser eye 70
- leadership 96
- life skills: autism 119, 122; cerebral palsy 95; special needs programs 105
- line dancing 69
- liver transplant 112–116
- locker rooms: autism 103–104; visual impairment 17, 58, 61, 62
- long jump 39, 124
- lunges 69, 70, 73
- martial arts 41–43, 121
- Meet of Champions 40
- McMoves® program 121
- menstrual cycle 49, 51
- merry-go-rounds 129
- middle school: autism 90–92, 118, 121–125, 137–144; cerebral palsy 35–37, 85–86, 87, 98–100; prosthetic leg 23–24; special needs programs 107, 110; spinal muscular atrophy 129–130; transplant patient 113–115; visual impairment 28–29, 134
- moral issues 60
- motor skills 117, 121, 122
- Muscular Dystrophy 128–130
- music: autism 90, 91, 126; diabetes 47, 53, 55; hearing impairment 57, 76; wheelchair users 75, 76
- neurodiversity 34–44; autism 37, 89–94, 103–104, 117–127, 140
- nicknames 21
- night blindness 134
- noise: autism 103–104, 119, 126; hearing impairment 63–67, 75; visual impairment 17, 58
- nonfiction narratives 6
- nutrition, and autism 118, 125
- obstacle courses 113, 122
- occupational therapy: autism 117, 119–122; cerebral palsy 99
- parachute games 50, 71, 91
- Paralympics 14
- peer tutors: transplant patient 114–115; visual impairment 131–135
- physical therapy: autism 117, 119–121; cerebral palsy 99
- pickleball 106, 135
- Pilates 106
- playgrounds 129
- posture 96
- preschool: autism 89, 90, 118–119; diabetes 50; spinal muscular atrophy 128; visual impairment 26
- prosthetic leg 20–25
- Proximal Femoral Focal Deficiency 20
- puberty: cerebral palsy 98–99; diabetes 49–50
- push-ups 120, 142
- quality of life, and diabetes 53
- reaching exercises 97
- recumbent bikes 105
- reflex integration therapy 120
- respect: diabetes 54, 55; visual impairment 31, 33, 60, 62
- rope climbing 119–120, 125
- rudeness 75, 141
- running: autism 90, 92, 123, 124; cerebral palsy 34, 36, 85; cross-country 18; diabetes 50, 51, 53; hearing impairment 67; prosthetic leg 21, 24, 25; special needs programs 109; transplant patient 113, 114; visual impairment 27, 29, 30, 57, 59–60, 61, 134; wheelchair users 68, 71–73; with tethers 61

- safety: cerebral palsy 40, 41, 84; visual impairment 59, 60
- scooters: autism 120; cerebral palsy 96; diabetes 50; prosthetic leg 23; transplant patient 113, 114; and wheelchair users 71–72, 74, 96
- self-confidence *see* confidence
- self-esteem 52
- sensory overload 119
- Sharks and Minnows 113
- shot put 109
- sit and reach test 120
- sitting volleyball 88
- sit-ups: autism 120, 123; wheelchair users 69, 70, 73, 77
- skate skiing 29
- skiing: bi-skis 98; cerebral palsy 98; classic 29; cross-country 29; downhill 14; skate 29
- skipping 113
- sled hockey 110
- soccer: autism 90, 91, 119; prosthetic leg 24; special needs programs 109; visual impairment 17, 132–133; wheelchair users 72
- social skills: autism 119, 122–125, 140, 141; cerebral palsy 37, 39–40; visual impairment 28
- softball 129, 130
- special needs programs 105–111
- Special Olympics 34–37, 109
- speech: autism 117–121; cerebral palsy 96–97
- speech therapy 117, 119–121
- spike ball 107
- spinal muscular atrophy 128–130
- spinal stenosis 133
- sports camp 16, 17, 18
- squads: cerebral palsy 96, 99; visual impairment 58, 62
- square dancing 58, 60
- stereotypes 60
- stress: cerebral palsy 43; diabetes 51; prosthetic leg 24; visual impairment 58–61
- stretching: autism 120; prosthetic leg 23; transplant patient 113, 114, 115; visual impairment 58
- swimming: autism 125; cerebral palsy 84–88; diabetes 48; visual impairment 58, 59; wheelchair users 68
- table tennis 93
- tag: autism 90; cerebral palsy 83; hearing impairment 67
- tennis 59
- toilet tag 67
- track and field: autism 124; cerebral palsy 40; special needs programs 109; visual impairment 16
- transplant patient 112–116
- treadmills 29
- tunnel vision 134
- upper body activities 22, 23
- vault 84
- visual impairment 14–19, 26–33, 57–62, 131–135
- volleyball: autism 123, 141; cerebral palsy 36, 84–85; hearing impairment 63–65, 77–80; prosthetic leg 24; sitting 88; special needs programs 106; spinal muscular atrophy 129; visual impairment 15–16, 27, 58, 59, 62, 135; wheelchair users 69, 72, 73, 77–80, 88
- walking: autism 93, 123, 125; cerebral palsy 100; prosthetic leg 25; visual impairment 134
- warmups: autism 137, 142; prosthetic leg 21, 23; visual impairment 58; wheelchair users 69, 73
- weight management 32
- weight training: autism 125; prosthetic leg 25; visual impairment 17, 28–29, 133
- wheelchair users 68–82, 88, 121; cerebral palsy 34, 41, 43, 96, 98–99; spinal muscular atrophy 128–130
- wrestling 29–33
- YMCA 121–122
- ziplining 43