

NASET LD Report #17

Students with Learning Disabilities Participating in Recess

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Abstract

The participation of a student with a Learning Disability (LD) in recess can often be rewarding for the student, peers, and teacher. The issue of NASET's LD Report, was written by Matthew D. Lucas, Ed.D., C.A.P.E., Associate Professor in the Department of Health, Athletic Training, Recreation, and Kinesiology at Longwood University and Ashley Woodson, a student at Longwood University. The paper will address common characteristics of students with LDs and present basic solutions to improve the experience of these students in the recess setting. Initially the definition, prevalence, and characteristics of LD will be presented. It will then address the benefits and recommendations for children with LD in recess.

Introduction

The participation of a student with a Learning Disability (LD) in recess can often be rewarding for the student, peers, and teacher. This paper will address common characteristics of students with LDs and present basic solutions to improve the experience of these students in the recess setting. Initially the definition, prevalence, and characteristics of LD will be presented. The paper will then address the benefits and recommendations for children with LD in recess.

Definition and Prevalence of Learning Disabilities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that children who are determined to have disabilities receive special education if the condition negatively affects the educational performance of the child. One disability category defined in IDEA, which includes a variety of specific disabilities, is *learning disabilities*. The following definition of LD is noted in IDEA (2004).

The term 'specific learning disability' means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.

Such term **includes such conditions as** perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

Such term **does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of** visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage

Such term **includes such conditions as** perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia (20 U.S.C. §1401 [30]).

As stated, a LD is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes in using or understanding language. It can cause a person to have trouble learning and using certain skills. These skills are: reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing math. (NICHCY Disability Fact Sheet #7, January 2011) LDs vary from person to person and not one is the same. Researchers believe that they are caused by differences in how the brain works and how it processes information. There is no cure for LDs, however with much focus children can overcome the obstacles that come with them. LDs are very common. As many as one out of every five people in the United States has a learning disability. Almost one million children (ages six through 21) have some form of a learning disability and receive special education in school. In fact, one-third of all children who receive special education have a learning disability (NICHCY Disability Fact Sheet #7, 2011).

Characteristics of Learning Disabilities

The importance of diagnosing LDs is very important. This is usually done by teacher observation, assessment of school work, and a variety of real testing. The early diagnoses can lead to early intervention and more success for the student. **Characteristics of children with LDs in elementary school include the following items:**

- Late speaking
- Slow to learn rhymes, numbers, letters, colors, and/or shapes
- Pronunciation and/or vocabulary issues
- Attention span problems
- Problems with directions
- Slow to develop fine motor skills
- Interaction difficulties with friends and peers
- Problems learning letter and sound connections
- Coordination/motor skills issues
- Reading/spelling issues like reversing, substituting, and inverting letters
- Focus on short-term memorization rather than long-term learning
- Organization/planning issues
- Barriers to remembering facts/circumstances (Learning RX, 2013)

Benefits of the Recess Setting for Children with Learning Disabilities

Simply stated, the benefits of the recess setting are high for all children. Included in these benefits are both physical and social benefits. In terms of physical benefits, recess has been shown to lead to:

- Improvement of out-of-school activity levels – children usually are involved in physical activities on days in which they participate in in-school physical activities (Dale, Corbin, & Dale, 2000).
- Improvement of general fitness and endurance levels for children (Kids Exercise, 2009).

For children with LD, the benefits of recess can be enormous – especially social benefits. Simply noting the characteristics given previously of children with LD, one can see how a structured social setting such as recess would be an ideal environment to address any deficits. A properly run recess program in which children are expected to follow rules and participate in socially enhancing and age-appropriate activities can no doubt assist in addressing some of the following characteristics common to children with LD:

- Late speaking
- Attention span problems
- Problems with directions
- Interaction difficulties with friends and peers
- Coordination/motor skills issues
- Focus on short-term memorization rather than long-term learning
- Organization/planning issues
- Barriers to remembering facts/circumstances

Recess Recommendations for Children with Learning Disabilities

To achieve the aforementioned goal of addressing some of the characteristics often associated with recess, a few procedures should be put into play. The following recommendations should be put into place:

- Have children plan what they are going to do at recess. Tell them to write it down before recess setting basic times or simply different activities. This can also be done with friends before recess. This addresses children that may have problems with organization/planning issues and interaction difficulties.
- Set-up or encourage children to change activities at recess. Remember, it is often said that a child's attention span is that of his/her age. Having children change activities addresses potential problems with attention span, following directions, and interaction difficulties.
- Encourage students to discuss in class what they did at recess in groups or in front of the class. This hopefully assists children that show late-speaking tendencies, interaction difficulties, as well as difficulties remembering facts.
- Encourage students to keep journals of recess activities with reflections of each day. Have them include reflections on what they planned and then what transpired. This addresses children that show difficulties remembering facts and short-term memorization difficulties.
- Simply encourage children to participate in a variety of safe activities. This addresses motor skills/coordination difficulties.
- Encourage students to remain active throughout the recess period.

Conclusion

The participation of a student with LD in recess can often be both challenging and rewarding for both the student and teacher. The rewards can manifest themselves in the ability of the teacher to guarantee the safety of all students in an instructionally sound environment. This paper has hopefully addressed some basic concerns and solutions to improve the recess setting of students with LD.

References

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