Examining Whether Student Participation in School Sponsored Extracurricular Activities is Represented in IEPs

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which extracurricular activities are included in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of secondary age students with intellectual disability. Student characteristics (grade, disability, use of augmentative and alternative communication) were examined to explore potential group differences. Participants were 498 special education teachers who had at least one student with an intellectual disability on their caseload who had participated in a school sponsored extracurricular activity. Data were collected through an online questionnaire sent to members of a national listserv for transition professionals. Findings reveal that 63.69% (n = 314) of teachers reported they included information about extracurricular activities in the IEP; however, only 59.61% (n = 186) of these teachers also reported their student worked on IEP goals during extracurricular activities. Student characteristics were related to the presence of extracurricular activities in the IEP, number of IEP goals students worked on during extracurricular activities, student's most important IEP goal, and whether students received instruction on their most important IEP goal during extracurricular activities.

Examining Whether Student Participation in School Sponsored Extracurricular Activities is Represented in IEPs

The value of providing opportunities for students with intellectual disability to participate in school sponsored extracurricular activities has received increased attention (Agran et al., 2017; Pence & Dymond, 2016). As stated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004; P.L. 108-446), students with disabilities should participate in extracurricular activities with peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate. In addition, schools must provide appropriate supplementary aids and services to support students during these activities. Participating in extracurricular activities is a typical (and desired) part of students' school experiences and its value for students with disabilities-particularly, students with intellectual disability-is increasingly being recognized (Carter, Swedeen, Moss, & Peski, 2010). As Seow and Pan (2014) noted, extracurricular activities have become an important component of students' school life and provide a means for students to have a balanced educational experience. Because schools invest a significant amount of resources to support such programs for typical students, it goes without saying that students with disabilities must have equal opportunity to participate in such activities. Since participating in extracurricular activities is a typical part of adolescent experience, it should also be a typical experience for students with intellectual disability (Carter et al., 2010).

Extracurricular activities provide numerous benefits for all students, i.e., students with and without disabilities (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). As Darling (2005) suggested, extracurricular activities provide students with highly structured leisure activities that allow them to exert control over their personal experiences and express their identities. Further, Darling noted that participation in extracurricular activities is associated with enhanced academic achievement.

Larson and Varma (1999) observed that adolescents in the United States spend more than half of their waking hours involved in leisure activities. Consequently, having adolescents involved in structured activities, led by an adult, provide invaluable opportunities to develop social relationships and facilitate skill development. The literature suggests participation increases opportunities for students to socially network and develop friendships (Carter et al., 2010), allows students to identify interests and preferences and develop self-determination skills (Vinoski, Graybill, & Roach, 2016), helps students develop a social identity and sense of belonging (Pence & Dymond, 2016), provides opportunities to practice IEP goals (Agran et al., 2017), and enhances postschool success and community involvement (Modell & Valdez, 2002). Additionally, non-academic settings may serve as inclusive environments in which there are repeated opportunities to practice and generalize targeted skills above and beyond what is taught in the classroom (Vinoski et al., 2016).

There is emerging research that suggests individualized education program (IEP) meetings may present opportune situations to discuss and plan a student's participation in extracurricular activities (Agran et al., 2017; Pence & Dymond, 2016). There is no question that IEPs serve as the "cornerstone of specialized instruction" (Thoma, Saddler, Purvis, & Scott, 2010, p. 3). They guide instruction and provide the basis for detailed instructional plans, ensure that systematic instruction is delivered and monitored, and provide a means to determine if a program is successful (Friend, 2013). Most importantly, they represent formal agreements among school personnel, parents, and students that ensure appropriate educational services and supports are provided. Currently limited research has examined how extracurricular activities are represented in IEPs.

Two studies have evaluated the presence of extracurricular activities within the IEP.

Powers et al. (2005) analyzed 399 IEPs from students ages 16 to 22 across a range of disabilities and found that only 11.3% of IEPs had any reference to involvement in extracurricular activities. They noted the absence of extracurricular activities in IEPs does not mean that these activities were not provided; however, since IEPs represent the only official, legally binding record of a student's education, without this documentation there is no formal way to determine if extracurricular activities were in fact provided and monitored. Additionally, Agran et al. (2017) surveyed 143 special education teachers at the K-12 level who taught students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Most teachers (45%) reported describing extracurricular activities in the IEP, although only 10% stated that activities were listed as measurable instructional goals. The absence of extracurricular activities in IEPs may suggest that teachers do not consider extracurricular activity as part of a comprehensive educational program (Carter et al., 2010).

There is also limited research regarding the types of support students receive during extracurricular activities and whether supports provided are the same supports listed in the IEP. Kleinert et al. (2007) surveyed 242 teachers of students with moderate and severe intellectual disability in grades K-12 and found that students received support from a variety of people (i.e., parent, special education teacher, general education teacher, paraprofessional, peer) during extracurricular activities. This finding is supported by Pence and Dymond (2016) who analyzed a subset of their survey data that included 37 teachers of middle school students with severe disabilities and found teachers reported a wide range of people supported students during extracurricular activities, although peer supports were the primary supports provided. In addition, few teachers reported modifying instruction or materials to support student participation in extracurricular activities. Only one study examined the presence of supports in

the IEP. Agran et al. (2017) found that 21% of teachers in their survey reported listing the type of support provided during extracurricular activities in the IEP; however, information was not gathered within the survey about the types of supports teachers provided.

In all, there is limited research about how extracurricular activity goals are included in IEPs and how instruction is provided on IEP goals within extracurricular activities. Gathering information about where teachers report student participation in the IEP, when and where instruction is provided, how much time is spent on instruction, and what types of data are collected could help inform the field about the ways in which extracurricular activities can be linked to the IEP. In addition, previous research has suggested that student characteristics such as age (Simeonsson, Carlson, Huntington, McMillen, & Brent, 2001), level of disability (Lipscomb et al., 2017), and AAC usage (Kleinert et al., 2015) affect student participation in school settings, thus investigating the relation between these variables and the inclusion of extracurricular activity participation in the IEP may help determine whether student characteristics are associated with decisions to include extracurricular activities in the IEP.

The purpose of the present study was to conduct a national survey of special education teachers who serve students with intellectual disability at the secondary level (i.e., middle through post-high school) regarding the inclusion of extracurricular activities in the IEP. The following questions were addressed:

1. Where do teachers include information about extracurricular activities in the IEP?
2. How many and what types of IEP objectives do students work on during extracurricular activities?
3. Where do students receive instruction on IEP objectives, who provides the instruction, when is the instruction delivered, and what types of data are collected?

4. What is the relation between student grade, level of disability, and use of AAC, and (a) presence of extracurricular activities in the IEP, (b) number of IEP goals/objectives worked on during extracurricular activities, (c) most important IEP goal/objective for students during extracurricular activities, (d) provision of instruction on most important IEP goal/objective during extracurricular activities, and (d) instructor responsible for extracurricular activities?

Method

Participants

A national listserv of transition professionals (e.g., special education teachers, transition specialists, vocational rehabilitation providers) maintained by the Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment at the University of Oklahoma (N = 10,334) was obtained. Most members on the listserv were Southern based and served students at the secondary or post-high school levels. We requested respondents to complete the survey if they had worked with students with intellectual disability, inclusive of all levels of support needs, and if in some way had been involved in or supported students' participation in extracurricular activities. This list was used to identify a convenience sample. As Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, and John (2004) suggested, the use of web-based surveys eliminate geographic boundaries, may potentially increase the survey's sample size, and ensure participant anonymity.

The researchers obtained Institutional Review Board approval prior to the recruitment of participants and survey distribution. Individuals were invited to participate if they met the following criteria: (a) were a licensed special education teacher of middle school, high school, or post-high school students and (b) had at least one student with intellectual disability on their caseload who participated in a school-sponsored extracurricular activity in the last two years. A

school-sponsored extracurricular activity was defined as:

> An activity that does not earn academic credit, is offered on a consistent basis (often throughout the school year), and is approved by the school administration. Participation is voluntary although students may need to meet certain requirements to participate.

Examples of common school-sponsored extracurricular activities are clubs and sports. Individuals were excluded if they were not special education teachers who served students with an intellectual disability, if they taught at the preschool and elementary levels, or if they did not have a student with an intellectual disability on their caseload who had participated in a school sponsored-extracurricular activity in the last two years.

Respondents were primarily White (84.91%), female (88.28%), and lived in the South (50.51%) (see Table 1). Most worked at the high school level (65.52%) and had more than 10 years of teaching experience (62.44%), and had six or more students with intellectual disability on their caseload (65.19%). The majority (64.47%) had assisted with school sponsored extracurricular activities during the last three years, serving most often in the role of sponsor, advisor, or instructor (44.96%). The most frequent activities with which respondents assisted were sports/fitness (51.81%) and school clubs (31.33%).

Questionnaire

A 33-item questionnaire was created for the purpose of this study that included 24 forced-choice and 9 open-ended items. The questionnaire was piloted with five doctoral students who previously served as special education teachers at the secondary level. Minor changes were made to the wording of the questionnaire as a result. The final questionnaire took about 15 minutes to complete and included two sections. The first section asked respondents to provide demographic information. In the second section respondents were asked to think about the

student on their caseload with the greatest support needs who had participated in an extracurricular activity in the last two years. Following, they were asked questions regarding student characteristics, including a question about the student's disability. The traditional terms of mild, moderate, severe, and profound were used as many school districts continue to use them rather than the AAIDD support model (Luckasson et al., 1994; Wehmeyer, 2003). As Wehmeyer noted, the support model aligns with AAIDD intensities of support (e.g., intermittent, extensive) with previously used diagnostic terminology (e.g., mild, severe). Following this model, these terms were used to help teachers think about not only about the disability label but also the student's support needs. Other questionnaire items focused on the types of extracurricular activities in which the student participated; the extent to which IEP goals were worked on in these activities; and, if instructional goals relative to extracurricular activity were addressed, the number of goals, the focus of the goals, who provided instruction, where instruction was delivered, and what type of data were collected. Additionally, if respondents indicated they did not provide instruction or collect data during extracurricular activities, they were asked to describe the rationale for this decision.

Dissemination

An email invitation to participate in the study was sent to all members of the Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment listserv. The invitation included information about the survey and a link to the consent form and anonymous survey. A second invitation was sent one week after the first message. The survey was administered on SurveyMonkey and kept open for a month. When submitting completed surveys, participants could register for a drawing for one of five $20 gift cards.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies, percentages) were calculated for forced choice questions using IBM SPSS version 24. Open ended questions were coded using a content analysis procedure (Patton, 2015). One researcher read all responses, developed initial codes, and coded the data. A second researcher independently reviewed the coded data to determine inconsistencies in the application of codes. Both researchers met face-to-face to discuss minor inconsistencies and make final decisions about the classification of data.

Chi-square analyses were conducted to determine relations between student grade (middle school, high school, post-high school); level of disability; and AAC usage (user, non-user), with the following five categorical variables: (a) presence of extracurricular activities in the IEP (yes, no), (b) number of IEP goals/objectives worked on during extracurricular activities (zero, one or more), (c) most important IEP goal/objective teachers identified for students during extracurricular activities (social/communication, other), (d) instruction on most important IEP goal/objective during extracurricular activities (yes, no), and (e) instructor during extracurricular activities (special education teacher, other). If significant differences were found within student grade or level of disability, follow up chi-square analyses using Bonferroni corrections were conducted to identify where differences occurred.

Results

A total of 736 teachers logged into the survey. Thirty-seven teachers did not consent to participate in the study. One hundred sixty-seven of the respondents were excluded because they completed less than 75% of the survey. Also, 34 surveys were excluded because the example or examples of extracurricular activities provided were not examples that met our definition of a school-sponsored extracurricular activity. This left us with a total of 498 useable surveys for

analysis. When asked to select the student with intellectual disability on their caseload with the greatest support needs for purposes of answering questions about the inclusion of extracurricular activities in the IEP, teachers primarily selected a student at the high school level (68.77%), with moderate (42.97%) or mild (30.12%) intellectual disability who did not use AAC (77.30%).

Inclusion of Extracurricular Activities in the IEP

Most teachers (63.69%) indicated that student participation in school-sponsored extracurricular activities was included in their student's IEP (see Table 2). The sections of the IEP in which they most frequently described extracurricular activities were strengths or preferences/interests (35.70%), least restrictive environment (30.43%), and present level of performance (PLOP) (20.08%).

When asked why student participation was not included in the IEP, the primary reasons given were that extracurricular activities were voluntary for the student and thus including them in the IEP was not required (27.50%), the student did not need IEP support for participation (26.25%), and resources/support were not available (20.63%). Interestingly, 16.25% of the teachers said they did not think about including extracurricular activity participation in the IEP.

Number and Type of IEP Goals/Objectives Worked on During Extracurricular Activities

The majority of respondents (59.61%) reported that their student worked on one or more IEP goals/objectives during school-sponsored extracurricular activities (see Table 2); however, a large percentage (40.39%) indicated their student did not address any IEP objectives. The primary reasons teachers reported for not addressing IEP goals/objectives during school-sponsored extracurricular activities were that the student did not require IEP support (41.32%) and support was not available (28.93%).

IEP objectives targeted within school-sponsored extracurricular activities

overwhelmingly focused on social communication skills (82.42%), although over a quarter of teachers also targeted skills focused on independent living (32.42%) and recreation (26.37%). When asked which objective was viewed (in the teacher's opinion) as most important to address, 86.31% of respondents reported social/communication skills.

Instruction on IEP Goals/Objectives

A little more than half of the teachers (54.70%) who included extracurricular activities in IEP objectives indicated that instruction on the student's most important IEP goal/objective was provided during the extracurricular activity (see Table 2). Most teachers reported that students received additional instruction on their most important goal/objective outside the extracurricular activity as natural opportunities occurred (80.41%) or during a daily scheduled lesson (57.73%). This additional instruction typically occurred in the special education classroom (88.78%).

Special education teachers (50.51%) served as the primary instructor for teaching their student's most important IEP objective during extracurricular activities, although a variety of other people also served as instructors including paraprofessionals (46.32%), peer buddies (45.26%), coaches (35.79%), and general education teachers (31.58%). In most cases (57.73%) the primary instructor was also the activity sponsor.

Regarding data collection, the majority of teachers (91.49%) indicated they collected data during extracurricular activities on their student's performance of their most important IEP objective, but these data were largely anecdotal (68.09%) or relied on input from others (54.26%). There was wide variability in the frequency with which teachers collected data.

Relation of Student Characteristics to IEPs

Presence of Extracurricular Activities in the IEP. There was a significant difference between grade and presence of extracurricular activity participation in the IEP, χ^2 (2, N = 485) =

13.84, $p = .001$, $V = .166$. High school students (67.36%, $n = 227$) were significantly more likely to have extracurricular activity participation listed in the IEP than middle school students (48.69%, $n = 56$), χ^2 (1, $N = 447$) = 13.26, $p < .001$, $\phi = .172$. There were no significant differences between middle school (48.69%, $n = 56$) and post-high school students (65.79%, $n = 25$), χ^2 (1, $N = 152$) = 3.18, $p = .075$, $\phi = .145$.

There was no significant difference between level of disability, χ^2 (2, $N = 493$) = 3.88, $p = .143$, $V = .089$, or AAC usage, χ^2 (1, $N = 486$) = 3.45, $p = .063$, $\phi = .084$, and presence of extracurricular activity participation in the IEP.

Number of IEP goals/objectives. There was a significant difference between level of disability and number of IEP goals/objectives worked on during extracurricular activities, χ^2 (2, $N = 312$) = 9.83, $p = .007$, $V = .178$. Students with severe disabilities (71.59%, $n = 63$) were significantly more likely than students with mild disabilities (48.23%, $n = 41$) to work on one or more IEP goals/objectives during extracurricular activities, χ^2 (1, $N = 173$) = 9.83, $p = .002$, $\phi = .238$. There was no significant difference between students with severe disabilities (71.59%, $n = 63$) and moderate disabilities (58.99%, $n = 82$), χ^2 (1, $N = 227$) = 3.71, $\phi = .054$.

AAC users (80.55%, $n = 58$) were also more likely than non-AAC users (53.22%, $n = 124$) to work on one or more IEP goals/objectives during extracurricular activities, χ^2 (1, $N = 305$) = 17.08, $p < .001$, $\phi = .237$.

There was no significant difference between grade and number of IEP goals/objectives worked on during extracurricular activities, χ^2 (2, $N = 306$) = 0.79, $p = .673$, $V = .051$.

Most important IEP objective. There was a significant difference between level of disability and most important IEP goal/objective teachers identified for students during extracurricular activities, χ^2 (2, $N = 168$) = 9.86, $p = .007$, $V = .242$. Students with severe

disabilities (86.66%, n = 52) were significantly more likely than students with mild disabilities (60.00%, n = 21) to have social/communication identified as the most important IEP goal/objective during extracurricular activities, χ^2 (1, N = 95) = 8.83, p = .003, ϕ = .305. Students with severe disabilities (86.66%, n = 52) were also significantly more likely than students with moderate disabilities (67.12%, n = 49) to have social/communication as the most important IEP goal/objective identified during extracurricular activities, χ^2 (1, N = 133) = 6.84, p = .009, ϕ= .228.

There was no significant difference between grade, χ^2 (2, N= 165) = 1.99, p = .370, V = .110, or AAC usage, χ^2 (1, N = 165) = 2.51, p = .113, ϕ = .123, and most important IEP goal/objective teachers identified.

Provision of instruction on most important IEP objective. There was a significant difference between grade and whether students received instruction on their most important IEP goal/objective during extracurricular activities, χ^2 (2, N = 178) = 8.34, p = .015, V = .216. Post high school students (86.66%, n = 13) were significantly more likely than high school students (49.61%, n = 65) to receive instruction on their most important IEP goal/objective during extracurricular activities, χ^2 (1, N = 146) = 7.42, p = .006, ϕ = .226. There was no significant difference between post high school and middle school students, χ^2 (1, N = 47) = 2.85, p = .091, ϕ = .246.

AAC users (67.85%, n = 38) were significantly more likely than non-AAC users (49.59%, n = 60) to receive instruction on their most important IEP goal/objective during extracurricular activities, χ^2 (1, N = 177) = 5.17, p = .023, ϕ = .171.

There was no significant difference between level of disability and instruction received during extracurricular activities, χ^2 (2, N = 181) = 4.50, p = .105, V = .158.

Instructor responsible for extracurricular activities. There were no significant differences found between student characteristics (grade, level of disability, and AAC usage) and instructor during extracurricular activities.

Discussion

Pence and Dymond (2016) conducted a survey in which they asked a sample of teachers to share their beliefs about the participation of students with severe disabilities in school clubs. Among the findings reported were the beliefs of several respondents that the IEP planning meeting should serve as appropriate times to discuss student participation in extracurricular activities and that IEP goals can be addressed in these activities. Similarly, Carter et al. (2010) indicated that such planning meetings provide opportune times to ensure that these activities are being included in students' educational programs. Responding to this need, the present study investigated the extent to which teachers of students with intellectual disability included information about their students' participation in extracurricular activities in the IEP, and, if included, what information was reported. The fact that there was mention of the students' extracurricular participation by the majority of respondents is encouraging and suggests at least some level of instructional accountability for these activities. Although information about participation appeared in different sections of the document—specifically, strengths and preferences, least restrictive environment, and present levels of performance (Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance [PLAAFP]))—the fact that the majority of respondents included this information in the IEPs of the targeted students suggest that participation in extracurricular activities is a worthwhile component of a student's education and, as such, should be represented.

Further, the majority of respondents indicated that one or more IEP goals/objectives were

addressed in extracurricular activities. Among the benefits of participating in extracurricular activities is the availability of opportunities to practice academic, functional, and social skills taught in academic settings. The fact that the majority of respondents took advantage of (used) these opportunities to have students practice various skills is noteworthy.

Instructional Delivery

The primary instructors responsible for delivering instruction in extracurricular activities were special educators, followed by coaches. Nevertheless, other stakeholders were also involved in delivering instruction. These included paraprofessionals, general educators, and peer buddies. In particular, the use of peer buddies is noteworthy. Pence and Dymond (2016) indicated that teachers in their survey reported that peers served most frequently as both primary and ongoing support during club meetings. Although the teachers were not asked directly if they believed that the support peers provided was more beneficial than adult support (e.g., paraprofessionals), Pence and Dymond suggested that one may infer this from their findings. Also, Carter et al. (2010) suggested that peers may be of value in "promoting inclusion and belonging" (p. 280) and not having students with disabilities become too dependent on adult support. Peers serve as natural supports and their use is highly encouraged (Pence & Dymond, 2015).

Instructional Focus and Data Collection

Pence and Dymond (2015) suggested that teachers should consider extracurricular activities that align with curriculum priorities. This will provide students with increased opportunities to practice skills across different areas (e.g., academics, social/communication, independent living skills) in integrated settings. In the present study, a large number of teachers reported that the principal focus of extracurricular activities was on promoting students'

social/communication skills. This finding is similar to what Agran et al. (2017) and Pence and Dymond (2016) reported and is not surprising given that the respondents based their responses on students with intellectual disability who often receive such instruction. Many students with intellectual and developmental disabilities have complex communication challenges, which negatively impact both the frequency and quality of their social interactions (Carter, Bottema-Beutel, & Brock, 2014). Regrettably, students with these challenges may be excluded from many school and community activities, including extracurricular activities (Pence & Dymond, 2016). Downing and Falvey (2015) recommended that teachers find communicative opportunities that naturally occur so that students can practice skills for different reasons and purposes to communicate. Extracurricular activities provide ideal opportunities for students to practice targeted skills. Carter, Huber, and Biggs (2015) indicated that extracurricular activities provide rich communication opportunities for students to practice social and communication skills. As Downing and Chen (2015) noted, many school environments are social and, as such, extracurricular activities may provide ample opportunities for students to interact. It is noteworthy that social/communication skills were reported to be the major focus of extracurricular activity IEP goals during extracurricular activities. We did not ask the teachers to identify which specific skills were being addressed, so we cannot comment on this. To that respect, future research that examines the social ecologies of various extracurricular activities is warranted to better inform teachers about the social skill requirements of these activities.

Additionally, the findings suggest that teachers also made use of extracurricular activities to practice other skills. This is important to consider in light of the priority IDEA 2004 has placed on academics. Indeed, a number of academic skills can be taught in a functional manner. For example, Pence and Dymond (2015) suggested that a cooking club can be used to practice

measurement or money counting skills, a drama club can be used to practice dressing or vocational skills, and a service club can be used to practice home living or safety skills.

Given the age range of the targeted students, it is somewhat surprising that only a limited number of respondents reported that the foci of IEP goals/objectives addressed were transition skills (i.e., career/employment, recreation, independent living). Participation in extracurricular activities has been recommended as a means to enhance postschool success; specifically, to broaden students' social network and support circles (Kleinert et al., 2007). Further, Lleras (2008) suggested that participation in extracurricular activities for students with disabilities may enhance their future educational attainment and wage earnings. Teachers are encouraged to consider how extracurricular activities can provide opportunities for students to practice various transition skills (e.g., self-determination, lifelong recreational skills).

As reported in the present study, 40% of teachers did not address specific IEP goals/objectives during extracurricular activities. This is unfortunate since these activities may provide students with rich and enjoyable opportunities to practice varied skills. Further, instruction embedded in these activities provides teachers with a shared, collaborative experience that enhances their students' inclusion and their connectivity to their colleagues (Carter et al., 2000).

Grade Level, Level of Disability, and Inclusion in IEPs

Several statistically significant findings were reported. First, students with intellectual disability were more likely to have extracurricular activity participation listed on their IEPs when they were in high school rather than other grade levels (i.e., middle school or post-high school). Interestingly, Kleinert et al. (2007) reported similar findings and indicated that high school students in their sample were five times more likely to participate in school clubs than

elementary age students, both in and outside school. Although we did not examine possible reasons for this difference, in a sense this is not surprising since high schools, by and large, offer more extracurricular activities than middle school, and high school students potentially have greater freedom in choosing to participate in desired activities.

Second, students with greater support needs (i.e., severe disabilities, AAC users) were more likely to work on one or more IEP goals/objectives during extracurricular activities than students with less support needs (i.e., mild disabilities, non AAC users). In addition, instruction was directed more toward social communication skills for students with severe disabilities than for students with mild or moderate disabilities. These findings underscore the fact that teachers who serve students with severe disabilities appear to appreciate the value of their students' participation in extracurricular activities and view extracurricular activities as an important avenue for delivering instruction on goals/objectives identified in the IEP.

Limitations and Future Research Needs

As indicated previously, the extent to which students with intellectual disability are participating in extracurricular activities has received increased attention. Much of the research has focused on estimates of frequency participation (see Agran et al., 2017; Kleinert et al., 2007), most of which have reported infrequent student participation. Also, a number of researchers have discussed the benefits of participation (Vinoski et al, 2016), or recommended strategies that can be used to promote participation (Carter et al., 2010; Pence & Dymond, 2015). Nevertheless, there is limited research on the extent to which extracurricular activity participation has been mentioned in IEPs and, if mentioned, what information was reported. Although the aim of present study was to address these needs, there were a number of limitations to this study.

First, data obtained were from self-reports. No IEPs or student records or performance

data were reviewed to verify the accuracy of the information provided. Clearly research is needed to assess the correspondence between what teachers reported and what they actually do.

Second, because we used a listserv that included more than just special education teachers, we were unable to determine the respondent pool sample size and consequently the response rate. Thus, we cannot suggest that the respondents were a representative sample and this no doubt remains a major limitation. Although online surveys have become the prominent method of eliciting participation, it is well acknowledged that they tend to produce a lower level of participation (Nulty, 2008; Saleh & Bista, 2017). This is a general problem to online surveys and, specifically, to the present study. Needless to say, future replications are warranted. Nevertheless, given the total number of completed responses, we believe the sample is adequate to support our interpretations.

Third, although the focus of the investigation was on students with the greatest support needs, teachers targeted students across the full range of intellectual disability—from mild to profound. Few respondents selected individuals with profound intellectual disability, thus further research is needed to explore the extent to which extracurricular activities are included in the IEPs of these students.

Fourth, although the present study provided information on personnel who were responsible for instruction, where instruction was delivered, when it was delivered, and the data collection procedures used, it would have been informative to learn which specific goals/objectives were addressed during extracurricular activities and how instruction was provided. Also, the reasons why teachers selected IEP goals/objectives as “most important” were not examined. Although the results clearly suggest that social/communication goals were most important to the majority of respondents, what information they used to make this selection was

not investigated.

One of the benefits of participating in extracurricular activities is that it provides students with naturally occurring opportunities to practice a variety of relevant skills in a socially reinforcing context (Carter et al., 2010). The respondents were not asked to indicate what specific cues, information, or consequences they delivered when they were present at these activities so it remains unknown how instruction was provided. Further research needs to explore these pedagogical issues.

Implications for Practice

In all, the findings were positive. A large number of respondents indicated that extracurricular activity participation was reported in the IEPs of the students selected and they (teachers) were responsible for delivering instruction. Nevertheless, schools may want to explore ways to more actively involve general educators in providing instruction in extracurricular activities and supporting students. Teachers should be encouraged to discuss student participation in extracurricular activities at IEP meetings and, as such, determine the appropriateness of including extracurricular goals/objectives in IEPs. Further, teachers should communicate both to parents and students that participation in extracurricular activities is appropriate to discuss at meetings and they should share their interests/preferences regarding these activities. Teachers may also want to encourage their students' peer buddies to participate as supports in extracurricular activities. In the present study, peer buddies were the second most used additional person support; interestingly, there was less than a 1% difference between paraprofessionals and peer buddies. As Wehman and Kregel (2011) noted, developing peer relationships is one of the most important and long-lasting social skills. The obvious advantage of extracurricular activities is the availability of peers who potentially can serve a vital role as a

support. Peers represent an invaluable resource and teachers are encouraged to determine meaningful ways to explore their use as instructional supports.

Last, teachers are asked to examine ways in which the supplementary aids and services listed in the IEP can be effectively employed in extracurricular activities. As with using peer buddies, these may be of great value in allowing students who otherwise did not participate in extracurricular activities to engage in such activities.

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Table 1

Teacher and Student Demographic Data (*N* = 498)

Demographics	*n*	%
Teacher[a]		
Race/ethnicity (*n* = 497)		
White	422	84.91
Black or African American	28	5.63
American Indian or Alaskan Native	17	3.42
Hispanic or Latino	15	3.02
Asian	4	0.80
Other	11	2.22
Gender (*n* = 495)		
Female	437	88.28
Male	58	11.72
Area employed (*n* = 491)		
South	248	50.51
Midwest	108	22.00
Northeast	70	14.26
West	64	13.03
U.S. Territory	1	0.20
Grade levels taught (*n* = 496)		
Middle school	117	23.59
High school	325	65.52
Post high school	29	5.85
More than one grade level	25	5.04
Years of experience teaching students with ID		
1-2	20	4.02
3-4	60	12.05
6-10	107	21.49
11 or more	311	62.44
Number of students on caseload with ID (*n* = 497)		
1 - 2	67	13.48
3 - 5	106	21.33
6 - 10	155	31.19
11 or more	169	34.00
Assisted with school sponsored extracurricular activity in last 3 yrs		
Yes	336	67.47
No	162	32.53
Role in school-sponsored extracurricular activity (*n* = 258)[b]		
Sponsor/Advisor/Instructor	116	44.96
Coach	83	32.17
Volunteer/Support Staff	64	24.81
Program Director/Coordinator	24	9.30
Other	3	1.16

Type of extracurricular activity in which teacher assisted (n = 332)[b]		
Sports/fitness	172	51.81
School club	104	31.33
Special events	55	16.57
Organization affiliated club	48	14.46
Music/drama	14	4.22
Other	6	1.81
Student[c]		
Grade level (n = 490)		
Middle school	115	23.47
High school	337	68.77
Post-high school	38	7.76
Disability (i.e., level of ID)		
Mild (intermittent supports)	150	30.12
Moderate (limited supports)	214	42.97
Severe (extensive supports)	118	23.70
Profound (pervasive supports	16	3.21
Use of AAC[b]		
Picture communication board/device	71	14.26
Electronic device with letters and words	45	9.03
Sign language	36	7.22
Other	4	0.80
Does not use AAC	385	77.30

Note. ID = Intellectual disability. AAC = augmentative and alternative communication.

[a] Teacher refers to the individual who completed the questionnaire

[b] Teachers were able to provide more than one response

[c] Student refers to the one student with ID on which the teacher based his/her responses

Table 2

Inclusion of School Sponsored Extracurricular Activities on the IEP (*N* = 498)

Survey Items	*n*	*%*
Location of extracurricular activity participation on the IEP (*n* = 493)[a]		
Not listed in IEP	179	36.31
In strengths or preferences/interests	176	35.70
Least restrictive environment	150	30.43
Present levels of performance	99	20.08
Transition plan	26	5.27
Specific instructional goal with activity as setting	22	4.67
Other	10	2.03
Reasons for not including extracurricular participation on IEP (*n* = 160)[a]		
Extracurricular activities are voluntary, not mandated	44	27.50
Student does not require IEP support	42	26.25
Resources/support not available	33	20.63
Teacher didn't think about it	26	16.25
Not required on the IEP	16	10.00
Not at scheduled IEP time	12	7.50
Other	7	4.38
Number of IEP goals worked on during extracurricular activities (*n* = 312)		
0	126	40.39
1	106	33.97
2	43	13.78
3 or more	37	11.86
Reasons students do not work on IEP goals during extracurricular activities (*n* = 121)[a]		
Student does not require IEP support	50	41.32
Support not available	35	28.93
Teacher didn't think about it	12	9.92
Interfere with inclusion	12	9.92
Extracurricular activities are voluntary, not mandated	9	7.44
Other	4	3.31
Focus of extracurricular activity IEP goals/objectives (*n* = 182)[a]		
Social/communication	150	82.42
Independent living	59	32.42
Recreation	48	26.37
Career/employment	35	19.23
Physical education	29	15.93
Academic	18	9.89
Other	7	3.85
Most important IEP goal/objective (*n* = 168)		
Social/communication	145	86.31
Career/employment	10	5.95
Academic	6	3.57

Independent living	5	2.98
Recreation	2	1.19
Instruction received on most important IEP goal/objective *during* extracurricular activities (*n* = 181)		
Yes	99	54.70
No	63	34.80
Not sure	19	10.50
Other times of day student receives instruction on IEP goal (*n* = 97)[a]		
As natural opportunities occur	78	80.41
Daily scheduled lesson	56	57.73
Immediate before extracurricular activity	43	44.33
Immediate after extracurricular activity	20	20.62
Only during activity	1	1.03
Additional locations for instruction on most important IEP goal (*n* = 98)[a]		
Special education classroom	87	88.78
General education	47	47.96
Non-classroom setting in school	39	39.80
Community site (vocational)	37	37.76
Community site (non-vocational)	26	26.53
Only during extracurricular activity	4	4.08
Primary instructor of most important IEP goal *during* extracurricular activities (*n* = 97)		
Special education teacher	49	50.51
Coach	19	19.59
Paraprofessional	12	12.37
General education teacher	9	9.28
Peer buddy	7	7.22
Other	1	1.03
Additional instructors of most important IEP goal *during* extracurricular activities (*n* = 95)[a]		
Paraprofessional	44	46.32
Peer buddy	43	45.26
Coach	34	35.79
General education teacher	30	31.58
Special education teacher	29	30.53
Volunteer	13	13.68
Related service provider	3	3.16
Other	2	2.11
No one else	6	6.32
Activity sponsor is primary instructor of most important IEP goal (*n* = 97)		
Yes	56	57.73
No	41	42.27
Type of data collected about most important IEP goal *during* extracurricular activities (*n* = 94)[a]		
Anecdotal	64	68.09
Input obtained from others (e.g. teachers, paraprofessionals, peers)	51	54.26

Student input	42	44.68
Frequency of occurrence	37	39.36
No data collected	8	8.51
Frequency of data collected about most important IEP goal *during* extracurricular activities (*n* = 86)		
Every time student participates	27	31.40
Weekly	28	32.56
Monthly	18	20.93
Quarterly/intermittent	13	15.11

Note. Data in table are based on teacher report for the student with intellectual disability on their caseload with the greatest support needs. IEP = Individualized Education Program.
[a] Teachers were able to report more than one response