


Chapter 4

Collaborative Preparation of Special Educators and Adapted Physical Educators

Jill Anderson

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0058-6502>
California State Polytechnic University,
Humboldt, USA

David Adams

California State Polytechnic University,
Humboldt, USA

Chris Hopper

California State Polytechnic University,
Humboldt, USA

Melaina A. Valdez

California State Polytechnic University,
Humboldt, USA

Delaney Hughes

California State Polytechnic University,
Humboldt, USA

Kalyn Ruland

California State Polytechnic University,
Humboldt, USA

ABSTRACT

Adapted physical education (APE) is an important, but often overlooked, component of a well-rounded education experience and provides a variety of benefits for student's health, well-being, and educational achievement. Interdisciplinary teacher preparation in special education (SPED) and APE can facilitate collaborative learning and prepare preservice educators to implement high-quality holistic education and participate in multidisciplinary teams. The objective of this chapter is to provide an overview of the importance of APE within educational programming and outline strategies for interdisciplinary education. These strategies include interdisciplinary instructional and community programming and implantation of action research. Providing opportunities to engage in purposeful multidisciplinary groups in teacher preparation programs prepares students to effectively step into their future roles as educators.

INTRODUCTION

Physical education (PE) is part of a well-rounded K-12 educational experience (Every Student Succeeds

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Act, 2015). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) protects the rights of all students to a free and appropriate education within the least-restrictive environment. For students with disabilities many times the least-restrictive environment is in a modified PE class, such as adapted physical education (APE). Within APE, students are provided the same, modified or different curriculum based on prior assessments and academic goals established by the multidisciplinary individualized education programming (IEP) team. Though APE is an important component of educational experiences that can support development in multiple domains of learning (e.g. psychomotor, affective, and cognitive), APE professionals are often overlooked in the IEP process. Implementing interdisciplinary educational components in teacher preparation programs can serve as a tool to improve depth and breadth of learning and collaborative communication skills that will serve future educators well for working in multidisciplinary teams. One of the most significant challenges all teachers face is identifying effective instructional strategies and determining the activity that best supports the learning of the student (Montgomery & Smith, 2015). Action research, first coined by Lewin (1946), is the process of the teacher identifying a problem (e.g., identifying effective instructional strategies) in their classroom and coming up with relevant solutions. Bringing educators from different focus areas (e.g., APE and special education [SPED]) together in action research and practical application through programming can serve a critical need to prepare future educators in SPED and related services for working effectively together and providing appropriate curriculum to all students.

The faculty at Cal Poly Humboldt recognized the unique opportunity to design and implement a multifaceted interdisciplinary program for teacher preparation in SPED and APE to improve the career readiness of future teachers. In the state of California, teacher credential programs are primarily post-baccalaureate. This system provides an opportunity to move students through the interdisciplinary program in cohorts. These cohorts have shared experience in coursework, student teaching, and community based field work that incorporates knowledge and skills necessary for the acquisition of both an Education Specialist teaching credential and an APE added authorization. The elements of Cal Poly Humboldt's interdisciplinary program have been intentionally designed to consistently draw on both specializations, providing students the opportunity to work collaboratively and develop a thorough understanding of the complementary nature of providing special education and related services to their future students with disabilities. This chapter will examine Cal Poly Humboldt's interdisciplinary framework for supporting the preparation of special educators and adapted physical educators through the following objectives:

Objective One: Provide an overview of APE and how APE teachers play an important role in interdisciplinary teams providing SPED services.

Objective Two: Examine how an interdisciplinary approach that includes physical activity (PA) can enhance student service delivery which improves educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

Objective Three: Present key design components in action research in an interdisciplinary teacher preparation program in SPED and APE.

Objective Four: Present practical examples of how SPED teachers and APE teachers can collaboratively design curriculum to enhance the academic, social emotional, and behavior outcomes for students with disabilities using action research models.

Objective Five: Provide examples of how a series of community engagement activities that include SPED and APE candidates can support recruitment into the professions.

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