

# UNDERSTANDING AND ENHANCING TEACHERS' SUPPORT FOR INCLUSIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Rebecca Bassett-Gunter, PhD

Lauren Tristani, MSc

Parissa Safai, PhD

Bert Imai, Digital Media Specialist

Andrea Haefele, Health and Physical Education Teacher

School of Kinesiology and Health Science

York University

## **ABSTRACT:**

Inclusive physical education provides an important opportunity to enhance well-being among all students including those with exceptionalities or disabilities. Teachers play a critical role in supporting the implementation of effective inclusive physical education. Unfortunately, many teachers do not feel adequately prepared or confident to implement inclusive physical education. The following video discusses the role of teacher training to support inclusive physical education, and a program of research to enhance our understanding of teacher training. This research will inform the development of tools and resources to support teachers in implementing inclusive physical education to enhance the well-being of all students.

*KEY WORDS:* inclusion, physical education, students with disabilities, teacher support, teacher training, student well-being, equity

## **PREAMBLE:**

Participation in regular physical activity provides myriad physical, social and mental health benefits for children and youth with exceptionalities and disabilities (e.g., Arim, Findlay & Kohen, 2012; Murphy & Carbone, 2008; Wind, Schwend & Larson, 2004). Inclusive physical education provides an important opportunity to enhance well-being among students with disabilities through physical activity (Porter, 2015). Teachers play a critical role in supporting the implementation of effective inclusive physical education (Sallis et al., 2012). Unfortunately, many teachers do not feel adequately prepared or confident to implement inclusive physical education (Coates, 2012; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Teacher training and professional development can be valuable in enhancing teachers' knowledge, skills and confidence to support inclusive physical education (Campbell, Gilmore, & Cuskelly, 2003). Optimally effective training and professional development must meet the needs and preferences of teachers. There is a need for research to understand and support teacher training for inclusive physical education.

The following video discusses the role of teacher training, tools and resources to support inclusive physical education. In partnership with Ophea (Ontario Physical and Health Education Association), researchers from York University have developed a program of research to enhance our understanding of teacher training for inclusive physical education. In recognizing the need for tools and resources to support teachers, Ophea created a resource called *Steps to Inclusion*. The *Steps to Inclusion* resource provides teachers with information regarding the implementation of inclusive physical education. There is no known research to examine the effectiveness of the *Steps to Inclusion* resource in meeting teachers' needs and preferences. In order to foster equitable experiences for all students, including those with disabilities, there is a need for evidence-based training, tools and resources to support health and physical education teachers. This research will inform the development of tools and resources to support teachers in implementing inclusive physical education to enhance the well-being of all students.

#### **VIDEO LINK:**

<http://kincommunities.info.yorku.ca/showcase/community-based-initiatives/inclusive-physical-education-in-ontarios-schools/>

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For more information, please contact Rebecca Bassett-Gunter [rgunter@yorku.ca](mailto:rgunter@yorku.ca)