

SOCIAL INCLUSION OF IEP STUDENTS WITHIN INCLUSIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION SETTING

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Abstract

Inclusive physical education has been implemented in Serbian schools since 2010 school year. Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is considered as a basic instrument of school adjustment to students with disabilities, difficulties and disadvantages, who need additional support in learning. Currently, in the Province of Vojvodina there are IEP students in two thirds of regular primary schools, the average being nine per school (Đorđić & Tubić, 2012). Inclusive physical education might have substantial benefits for all students, with social inclusion of IEP students being one of the most important. However, some argue that physical inclusion of IEP students does not necessarily imply their full social inclusion (Sherril, 2003). The aim of the study was to examine peer status of elementary IEP students within inclusive physical education setting. Sample consisted of 465 primary students (1-4th grade), out of which 24 were IEP students (17 boys, 7 girls). Sociometric questionnaire was applied in 20 inclusive classes in order to determine peer status of IEP students. Participants were asked to nominate a peer that they like the least to exercise with in physical education class and a peer that they like the most to exercise with. According to answers, students were classified into five groups: popular, average, neglected, rejected and controversial (Coie, & Dodge, 1988). Results indicate that none of IEP students was classified as average or controversial, 4 of them were classified as popular, while 10 students were rejected and 10 students were neglected by their schoolmates. IEP students were popular only in first two grades, with just one of them being neglected. IEP students received most of positive choices from neglected or rejected peers, and none of popular students chose them as preferable exercising partner. Although physical inclusion is mandated by law, real social inclusion can be achieved only by prioritizing this issue and by collaborative effort of school, families and local communities

Keywords: inclusive physical education, IEP students, social inclusion