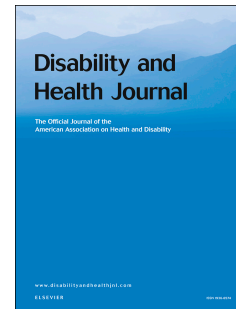


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Recess and Children with Disabilities: A Mixed-Methods Pilot Study

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Title Page

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Background. It is well-understood that children's social relationships are intrinsically linked to their overall health trajectories. Recess is the only time in the school day that children are free to play and socialize. Yet research on recess consistently indicates that many school playgrounds are challenged by a social landscape that is not conducive to meaningful play. While all children are susceptible to negative social experiences, children with disabilities are at a heightened risk for exclusion and victimization.

Objective. This study examines this phenomenon specifically within the context of recess. **Method.** Participants included 743 students in grades 4-8 who completed an anonymous on-line survey about their recess experiences. The responses of 44 students with disabilities were highlighted for analysis. MANOVA was used to assess sample differences between children who identified as having a disability and those who did not on self-reported recess enjoyment, affect, victimization and belongingness. Descriptive statistics and qualitative analyses were used to support the findings.

Results. Children with disabilities reported more negative affect and victimization and lower positive affect and belongingness.

Conclusion. Further research is warranted as the results indicate that children with disabilities are more vulnerable than their non-disabled peers during recess. Studies that explore the context of recess may provide further insights as to best practices.

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