Looking Inside Project Double Challenge: A Case Study

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 4
Abstract 5
Résumé 6
Review of the Literature 7
Physical activity for individuals with a disability 8
Physical Education Teacher Education programs- Adapted Physical Activity 10
Attitudes toward individuals with disabilities: Pre-Service and current teachers 14
Contact theory 17
Philosophy and models of practical experience in adapted physical activity 19
Inclusion in physical education/activity 27
Case studies 33
The Case: PDC 34
References 40
Research Article 48
Abstract 48
Résumé 49
Introduction 50
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Abstract

This thesis is composed of two parts, the review of the literature and a manuscript. In the review of the literature topics such as physical activity for individuals with a disability, physical education teacher education programs, and practical experience in adapted physical activity were covered in depth to provide a background for the manuscript. The manuscript was prepared in a research article format for the purpose of potential publication. The research focused on the practicum program Project Double Challenge (PDC) at McGill University. An intrinsic case study was used to collect data from multiple sources and capture individuals’ perceptions of the PDC experience. Three groups participated in the study: the McGill student, the young adult with a disability, and teachers of students involved. The themes that emerged from the data were positive aspects of the program, communication, and learning; each group expressed themes differently. In summary, PDC is a positive learning environment for all participants and communication plays a large role in the overall program.
Cette thèse est composée de deux parties, une revue de la littérature et un manuscrit. Lors de la revue des thèmes de la littérature comme l'activité physique pour les personnes ayant un handicap, des programmes d'éducation physique de formation des enseignants, et l'expérience pratique de l'activité physique adaptée ont été abordés en profondeur pour fournir un arrière-plan pour le manuscrit. Le manuscrit a été préparé dans un format article de recherche dans le but d'une éventuelle publication. La recherche a porté sur le programme de stage Projet Double Défi (PDC) à l'Université McGill. Une étude de cas intrinsèque a été utilisé pour recueillir des données provenant de sources multiples et saisir les perceptions des individus de l'expérience PDC. Trois groupes ont participé à l'étude: des étudiant de McGill, des jeune adulte ayant une déficience, et des enseignants des élèves impliqués. Les thèmes qui ont émergé à partir des données étaient les aspects positifs du programme, la communication et l'apprentissage, les thèmes ont été exprimés différemment par chaque groupe. En résumé, le PDC est un environnement d'apprentissage positif pour tous les participants et la communication joue un rôle important dans l'ensemble du programme.
Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study was to investigate and describe participants’ individual perceptions of the practicum Project Double Challenge (PDC). For over 30 years, PDC has been a practicum for the course Adapted Physical Activity (EDKP 396) at McGill University. The instructor of PDC and the primary researcher assume the program is successful at some level, however, the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of its success needs to be explored. There were three groups who participated in the study and included McGill undergraduate students, young adults with a disability who attended PDC for physical activity (also referred to as young adults), and teachers of students involved. The question guiding the research was: How do those individuals perceive the PDC experience?

The practicum focuses on providing McGill students with an opportunity to work with individuals who have a disability in a physical activity setting and apply knowledge learned in the course to their weekly teaching. However, PDC also serves as a physical activity program for the individuals with disabilities, in which the focus is providing a safe and positive physical activity experience. To better answer the guiding question a literature review was conducted on related areas. The following topics were discussed: physical activity for individuals with a disability, physical education teacher education programs and adapted physical activity, attitudes of pre-service and current teachers towards individuals with disabilities, contact theory, philosophy and models of practical experience in adapted physical activity, and inclusion in physical education/activity. An intrinsic case study was used, which describes the PDC experience as the center
of the research. The methods used in the study are also summarized in this review. Lastly, a description of the practicum program PDC was provided.

**Physical Activity for Individuals with a Disability**

“Individuals with disabilities, for the most part, can gain very similar benefits from physical activity and the accrued physical fitness as people without disabilities.” (Seaman, Corbin, & Pangrazi, 1999, p. 1). It is sometimes a misconception that individuals with a disability can neither fully participate in physical activity nor benefit from participation in the same manner as those without a disability. Through physical activity individuals with a disability can improve the function of their heart, lungs, muscles, and bones through exercise and recreation (Bartlo & Klein, 2011; Rimmer & Rowland, 2008; Johnson, 2009). In addition, physical activity can slow the progression of secondary conditions (i.e. obesity) and help make the activities of daily living easier (Rimmer & Rowland, 2008). Other benefits include meeting new people, high levels of participant/parent satisfaction (Johnson, 2009), improved attitudes of adults with intellectual disabilities towards physical activity (Heller, McCubbin, Drum, & Peterson, 2011), enjoyment, and experiencing new activities. Individuals who have a disability can benefit from participation in physical activity, but in reality they are not as active as those without a disability (Rimmer & Rowland, 2008).

Individuals with a disability who learn to be physically active can enhance their daily lives. Blinde and McClung (1997) examined the impact of individualized physical recreation programs on people who have physical
disabilities and uncovered multiple benefits. Participants’ expressed improved perceptions of physical attributes, opportunities to experience their body in new ways, redefined physical capabilities, increased confidence to pursue new physical activities, expanded social interactions and experiences, and the ability to initiate social activities in different settings. Participants “developed an enhanced sense of control in both their physical and social lives” (p. 339) and conveyed a desire to continue recreational activities. The opportunity to engage in recreational activities is important to an individual’s well-being and also assists in developing skills and the desire to initiate recreation and physical activity for personal enjoyment and pleasure (Blinde & Taub, 1999).

Programs that are successful in assisting individuals to achieve positive physical activity outcomes should be explored. More specifically, researchers should investigate the aspects of a program which help create a positive experience and transfer those aspects to existing programs or new programs. Providing additional recreation and physical activity programs that serve individuals with a disability may help increase their activity levels and knowing why those programs are effective is a research priority.

Individuals with a disability experience a variety of barriers and facilitators related to participation in physical activity (Rimmer & Rowland, 2008). Rimmer, Riley, Wang, Rauworth, and Jurkowski (2004) explored barriers and facilitators in the United States. Four different groups of participants who directly or indirectly influence physical activity participation were involved: consumers with disabilities, architects, fitness and recreation professionals, and
city planners and park district managers. The findings were grouped into ten major categories each of which could be a barrier or facilitator: (1) built and natural environments, (2) cost/economic, (3) equipment, (4) guidelines, codes, regulations and laws, (5) access of information, (6) emotional/psychological, (7) knowledge, education, and training, (8) perceptions and attitudes, (9) policies and procedures, (10) resource availability (Rimmer et al., 2004). Built and natural environments can be a barrier, for example lack of elevators, doorways being too narrow, and lack of curb cuts (Rimmer et al., 2004). In contrast, the environment can also be a facilitator that provides adequate and accessible parking, push button operated doors, and ramp access to whirlpools and hot tubs (Rimmer et al., 2004). Understanding the barriers and facilitators individuals with a disability encounter can provide valuable information to all involved, directly or indirectly, in providing quality physical activity. Community programs should be aware of, and address, the challenges their participants face. This information can answer questions such as: why don’t individuals with a disability participate in existing programs? (King et al., 2003). Physical activity is important for everyone and there should be equal opportunity for all.

**Physical Education Teacher Education programs- Adapted Physical Activity**

Sherrill (2004) stated, “all good physical education is adapted physical education” (p. 10). Physical education classes often have students with various abilities that require different adaptations. Physical education teacher education (PETE) programs often devote one course to adapted physical education (Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995). Generally this course is composed of 66% generic content such
as law, pedagogy, sport, and service delivery and the remaining 33% deals with learning about specific disabilities in a categorical format (Emes, Longmuir, & Downs, 2002). This one course could impact how future teachers approach students with a disability, especially if it is the only exposure.

In courses related to physical activity and disability the disabilities are sometimes taught in categories (i.e. autism spectrum disorder is categorized as a developmental disability). Each disability is presented (i.e. definition, diagnosis, characteristics, cause) before moving on to the next one. The risk of teaching about disability in a categorical format is that students may develop stereotypical attitudes and perceptions towards individuals with a disability (Emes et al., 2002). University students who are unfamiliar with disabilities may prefer learning in a categorical format because it familiarizes them with a variety of disabilities. Also, some students find it easier to deal with definitions, causes, and interventions than with the individual themselves (Emes et al., 2002). Therefore, it is important for preparation programs to focus on abilities and to have a person-first attitude, which helps to minimize stereotypical perceptions of future teachers. A person-first attitude places the focus on the individual person rather than the category of the disability (Emes et al., 2002).

PETE programs are designed to prepare future educators to provide quality physical education/activity. Practitioners stress the importance for hands-on experience in physical education teacher education programs to begin early and continue throughout the program (Collier & Hebert, 2004). Early experience in the field will give PETE students more exposure to real life situations. Students
should be provided with well supervised practicum experiences where they have
the opportunity to apply theories learned and receive constructive feedback
(Collier & Hebert, 2004). Many current physical educators feel that the most
valuable part of their teacher education program was the practical experience
(Collier & Hebert, 2004). It should be the responsibility of the PETE program to
explore different options of practical experience and provide students with
sufficient hands-on learning during their teacher education program.

Asking current practitioners about their experiences in PETE programs in
relation to APA is a strong source of information regarding their perceived
preparation. Hardin (2005) interviewed five young physical education teachers
about their education experience, teaching experience, and their comfort levels
working in an inclusive environment. An inclusive setting is one where all
individuals have an equal opportunity to fully participate regardless of their
ability (Kasser & Lytle, 2005). In Hardin’s (2005) study the teachers taught
students with and without disabilities in the same classes daily. Findings showed
teaching experience to be the most valuable source of knowledge regarding
inclusion, followed by the impact of other teachers, and having at least one course
in adapted physical education. One participant attended a university that infused
information about inclusion throughout the curriculum and was noticeably more
confident and competent in teaching students within an inclusive setting (Hardin,
2005). DePauw and Goc Karp (1994) defined infusion as a systematic approach to
integrating knowledge and understanding of disability and disability issues
throughout the undergraduate curriculum. For example, PETE students would
receive information related to disabilities in courses such as biomechanics, pedagogy, and motor development (i.e. motor development patterns in children with Down syndrome). Infusion advocates stress that by having separate courses on disability segregation is reinforced and emphasis is placed on differences (DePauw & Goc Karp, 1994). Including information about disability throughout the teacher education program will shift the emphasis on similarities and inclusive environments. It is assumed that exposure to information about disability throughout the curriculum and experience teaching individuals with disabilities, leads to improved confidence and competence (DePauw & Goc Karp, 1994; Hardin, 2005; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995). Teacher preparation programs should include information on individuals with disabilities (i.e. inclusion strategies) throughout the curriculum in order to provide additional exposure and experience (Folsom-Meek & Rizzo, 2002).

It is evident that the lack of preparation current physical educators feel towards teaching students with a disability must be addressed by PETE programs (Hardin, 2005). Whether through infusion or a separate course in adapted physical activity future teachers should be exposed to information about individuals with a disability. In addition, it is important for PETE programs to provide hands-on experience where the university student is able to apply knowledge learned in courses, receive constructive feedback, and experience teaching in a real life setting (Collier & Hebert, 2004). Teacher education programs should ensure students have the knowledge and resources to teach students with a disability one-on-one and in an inclusive setting.
Attitudes Toward Individuals with Disabilities: Pre-Service and Current Teachers

Teachers have different backgrounds and those backgrounds contribute to their attitudes towards working with individuals who have a disability. “The rationale for emphasizing attitudes is the strong belief of many professionals that attitude is the key to changing behaviors that will promote a better quality of life for individuals with disabilities” (Sherrill, 2004, p. 5). For example, in relation to teaching, does having a positive attitude towards individuals with a disability make someone a more effective teacher? Several studies have explored the attitudes of pre-service physical education teachers towards individuals with a disability (e.g. Hodge, Davis, Woodard, & Sherrill, 2002; Hodge & Jansma, 1999; Nolan, Duncan, & Hatton, 2000; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995; Stewart, 1990). Therefore, it is important to provide PETE students with supportive experiences working with individuals with a disability that may lead to more positive attitudes.

The main goal of many hands-on experiences in PETE related to teaching an individual with a disability is to positively change attitudes of pre-service teachers (Piletic & Davis, 2010). Research has shown that at the end of practical experience pre-service physical education students had more positive attitudes working with individuals with disabilities (e.g. Nolan et al., 2000; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995; Stewart, 1990). Thus, it is assumed that increasing the opportunities for university students to work with individuals with a disability in a supportive environment will lead to more positive attitudes.
Variables that impact attitudes towards working with individuals with disabilities can be teacher-related or student-related. Rizzo and Kirkendall (1995) identified the teacher-related variables as perceived confidence, academic preparation, and experience teaching individuals with disabilities. Teachers who have higher perceived competence (Hodge, Tannehill, & Kluge, 2003; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995; Rizzo & Vispoel, 1991), more academic preparation (Folsom-Meek, & Rizzo, 2002; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995; Rizzo & Vispoel, 1991), and previous experience teaching individuals with disabilities (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2003; Rizzo & Vispoel, 1991) tend to have more favorable attitudes. Providing additional academic preparation and more experiences working with individuals with a disability in pre-service teacher education may lead to more teachers having positive attitudes related to working with those who have a disability.

Student-related variables were identified as grade level (Kowalski & Rizzo, 1996) and type of disability (i.e. behavioral, physical) (Casebolt & Hodge, 2010; Kowalski & Rizzo, 1996; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995). Teachers have been found to have more favorable attitudes towards students who are younger (Kowalski & Rizzo, 1996) and those with mild disabilities (Casebolt & Hodge, 2010; Hodge & Jansma, 2000; Kowalski & Rizzo 1996; Rizzo & Vispoel, 199). Casebolt and Hodge (2010) explored high school physical educators’ views towards teaching students with mild and severe disabilities. Teachers expressed that students with severe disabilities, those who have behavioral difficulties, and students who are hyperactive are more difficult to teach because the modifications
Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study

and attention needed are significantly more time consuming (Casebolt & Hodge, 2010).

A teacher’s attitude is a significant factor when teaching students with a disability, specifically in an integrated setting. An integrated setting, which is different from an inclusive setting, is one where students with and without disabilities are taught in the same environment (Kasser & Lytle, 2005). Lienert, Sherrill, and Myers (2001) conducted a cross-cultural comparison of the concerns of physical educators in relation to integration. Teachers from Germany and the United States were interviewed and results indicated that many teachers did not feel prepared when teaching in an integrated setting and also felt a lack of support and resources. A suggestion made by teachers in both countries was for the school to provide in-service training that addressed the specific concerns of the teachers at that particular school. Providing schools with individualized in-service support would allow the needs unique to that school and the teachers to be the focus of the training.

Several studies have shown that teachers feel a lack of support and unprepared when presented with teaching students with a disability (e.g. Casebolt & Hodge, 2010; Hodge, Ammah, Casebolt, Lamaster, & O’Sullivan, 2004; Lienert et al., 2001). PETE programs need to examine how to better prepare teachers to feel confident and competent when teaching students with and without a disability. In addition, resources (i.e. workshops, cooperating with an adapted physical education teacher) to better support physical education teachers are needed to provide a positive environment for everyone. Providing pre-service and
current teachers with the support and knowledge they need may create more positive attitudes towards teaching students in an integrated setting.

In summary, attitudes of physical education teachers towards students with a disability can impact how an individual is taught (Sherrill, 2004). PETE programs often provide a field experience working with individuals with a disability, which helps university students develop positive attitudes towards that environment (Nolan et al., 2000; Piletic & Davis, 2010; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995). Teacher and student-related variables can affect the attitudes of physical education teachers (Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995). Future research could explore explicitly how teachers’ attitudes influence their behavior towards teaching students with disabilities in physical education.

Contact Theory

Contact theory has been identified as a useful theoretical construct in physical activity programs that focus on working with individuals with disabilities (Hutzler, 2003). Contact theory states that positive attitudes may be created if interactions are frequent, pleasant, and meaningful between persons with differences (Allport, 1954). In relation to APA, contact theory predicts that interacting with individuals with a disability will help create more positive attitudes of individuals without disabilities (Hodge et al., 2003; Tripp, French, & Sherrill, 1995). Studies that have focused on contact theory have investigated different variables such as gender (Slininger, Sherrill, & Jankowski, 2000; Tripp et al., 1995), type of disability (i.e. physical, learning, behavioral; Tripp et al.,
Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study

1995), and type of setting (i.e. segregated, integrated; Tripp et al., 1995). Studies with children have shown that girls have more positive attitudes than boys toward those with a disability (Slininger et al., 2000; Tripp et al., 1995) and students who attend physical education in an integrated setting have significantly lower attitudes towards their peers with a physical disability than students who attend a segregated setting (Tripp et al., 1995). The lower attitudes of the students who attend integrated physical education towards their peers with a physical disability may be related to competition during class (Tripp et al., 1995).

Slininger et al. (2000) examined contact theory in three fourth-grade physical education classes. The three classes were randomly assigned to conditions of structured contact where the teacher encouraged students to interact with the two students who had a disability, non-structured contact in which the two students with a disability were integrated into the class during the five minute warm-up and the rest of the time taught individually on the sidelines, and no contact. Students in the contact classes were provided with information related to the two students with a disability who were joining their class for the next month. In addition, the physical education teacher discussed how to interact with their peers with a disability joining the class and how to manage some tasks such as pushing a wheelchair. Throughout the four weeks the females’ attitudes did not significantly change but the males’ attitudes in both contact groups improved. More specifically, there was a significant change with the males who participated in structured contact on an adjective checklist (measured attitudes) and with the males who participated in the non-structured contact on the intention scale.
(measured tendency toward action). These may be because it is easier to change the lower attitude scores of the males as opposed to the already high attitudes of the females (Slininger et al., 2000). No significant change was found with the participants in the no contact group. Future research on contact theory could focus on why females have more positive attitudes than males towards individuals with a disability.

**Philosophy and Models of Practical Experience in Adapted Physical Activity**

APA shares different theories and terminology with allied fields such as sports medicine, kinesiology, rehabilitation, physical education, and special education (Reid & Stanish, 2003). The history of APA was strongly impacted by medicine, physical education, and special education (Reid & Stanish, 2003). In the twentieth century individuals with a disability were segregated in separate schools or institutions with few opportunities for physical activity (Reid, 2003). Over time the field of APA evolved from corrective therapy in which the focus was on fixing the problem, to segregated services based on disability level, to individualized programs focusing on adaptations and lifetime physical activity, and finally to self-determined physical activity that empowers individuals (Reid, 2003). Today the focus is on ability, which works towards eliminating the separation of individuals with and without disabilities (Emes et al., 2002). Emes and Velde (2005) support the abilities-based approach, which they argue is composed of person-centeredness, inherent inclusiveness, individualization, and environmental compatibility. Person-centeredness places the individual at the center of the program with the professional becoming a partner; together they plan
an appropriate physical activity program (e.g. asking the individual for input into what activities to choose). Inherent inclusiveness emphasizes that in an inclusive environment all individuals will have the same access to activities and participation with peers (Emes & Velde, 2005). This can be achieved when the focus is on the person; it allows the physical activity experience to become more individualized. Lastly, by providing an environment that is accessible and that encourages positive attitudes, an inclusive setting can be fostered (Emes & Velde, 2005). An abilities-based approach focuses on the whole person but the activity and environment are not ignored, they simply are not the main focus (Emes, et al., 2002; Emes & Velde, 2005). PETE students through practical experience can learn these four concepts.

There are several types of practical experience in APA. The most common are on-campus or off-campus practica, service learning, and internships (Sherrill, 2004). An on-campus practicum typically has individuals with disabilities come to the university to work either one-to-one or in small groups with a university student. This type of practicum provides a comfortable and constructive learning environment for the university student. A practicum located on-campus allows for personnel such as professors, directors, and graduate student mentors to provide feedback and suggestions more often (Hodge et al., 2002). In addition to university personnel, whoever accompanies the participant (i.e. teacher, parent, and aide) can also provide information and support to the university student. However, a drawback is that this type of practicum often does not provide the university student experience in an inclusive setting (Hodge et al.,
Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study

2002). The second option to gain experience in APA is an off-campus practicum, which typically takes place in a nearby school. The university student will primarily work with the cooperating teacher rather than the university professor and/or graduate student. Different experiences can occur during an off-campus practicum such as the student working in an inclusive or self-contained physical education class or a mixture of the two (Sherrill, 2004). In this setting a student may be exposed to a more inclusive environment which could result in less opportunity to adapt and modify individually.

Service learning is another option where university students can learn while working with individuals with disabilities (Sherrill, 2004). Within a service learning setting, students often volunteer their time in return for an important experience. The primary focus is on service to the agency and not necessarily on keeping track of academic performance. Examples of service learning opportunities are working with the Special Olympics, after school physical activity programs, or disability sport. The roles of the university student can vary depending on the program or organization (e.g. coaching, organizing events, teaching an activity, officiating). A final type of practical experience is an internship. Examples of internship placements are summer camps, sports teams, and recreation centers. During the internship the student will keep track of their progress and experience while periodically checking in with their professor. Practical experience can help the university student make connections between course information and real life situations. Any practical experience has the potential to be beneficial. Research should focus on how to provide a positive and
beneficial practical experience for the university student in the variety of environments they are offered.

A practicum in APA provides an opportunity where PETE students can apply knowledge learned in the course within a supportive learning environment (Emes & Velde, 2005). Research has shown that self-reflective journaling within an APA practicum provides PETE students the chance to reflect on the various components related to teaching students with a disability such as behavior and social issues (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2003). Connolly (1994) examined 10 fieldwork journals of PETE students where they described their APA experience in detail. Through self-reflective journaling students were able to reflect on their experience and also to be reflexive about their teaching. There were six sequential themes that emerged from the journals: (1) uneasiness, (2) first meeting/impression, (3) entering the world of difference, (4) sharing the experience of difference, (5) interaction is mutual: difference is transparent, and (6) the difference differences make. Before their fieldwork experience in APA began, the PETE students described feelings of nervousness and the fear of being unprepared, afraid the myths and assumptions would taint their first experience. First meeting passed and students shared mixed feelings of relief, surprise, and a desire to help “fix” the individuals with a disability. However, after a few weeks students began to truly “enter the world of difference” where they began to realize the true capabilities of their partner and view them as a person first. Over time the PETE students faced adversity through this APA experience which allowed them to notice how their partner was treated, see day to day obstacles for their partner,
Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study

and realize what they, themselves may take for granted. Towards the end of the experience the feelings of “fixing” their partners diminished and the PETE students began to see their partner as a person no different than anyone else. A practicum in APA allowed PETE students an opportunity to develop relationships with the individuals with whom they work. The APA experience in its entirety taught those 10 students how to make realistic expectations, teaching plans, and adaptations. More importantly, this practicum environment taught them to be more open minded and showed them how they can make a difference (Connolly, 1994).

The earliest APA practicum model began at Ohio State University by Arthur Daniels in 1954 (Hodge et al., 2003). A program that started as a gym and swim program, where PETE students gained experience working with children who had a disability, eventually evolved into an inclusion-based physical activity program called the Unified Physical Activity Program (UPAP) (Hodge et al., 2003). The UPAP program is based on contact theory. Youth who attend UPAP are divided into four groups based on age, children with disabilities included in each group. For example, a group may have 12 youth without disabilities, two with autism, one child developmentally delayed, one child with mental retardation, one child with neurological and muscular disabilities, and two children with speech and language impairments. Before groups are created the university students select and rank the groups they prefer to work with (Hodge et al., 2003).
University students’ self-reflective journals were explored through thematic analysis with 11 themes emerging: 1) attitude and socialization, 2) teaching variables, 3) managing and organizing, 4) content and activities, 5) disability types, 6) behaviors of youngsters, 7) inclusion and supports, 8) challenges and rewards, 9) learning experience, 10) communication, and 11) contextual and programmatic variables (Hodge et al., 2003). Through self-reflective journaling, Hodge et al. (2003) found that students are able to “focus on attitudinal and behavioral aspects of working with youngsters with disabilities as well as pedagogical, ethical, moral, and social issues” (p. 397). Also, this study showed that initial feelings of apprehensiveness changed throughout the eight weeks into more positive attitudes and higher levels of perceived competence.

The practicum component to an APA course is important to provide PETE students the opportunity to apply knowledge learned in the course (Connolly, 1994; Hodge & Jansma, 1999) and also to develop more positive attitudes when working with individuals with a disability (Hodge et al., 2003).

In summary, reflecting on the APA practicum experience through journaling has been found to help students grow in their teaching and as individuals (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2003). Writing exercises (i.e. journaling, stories, and case studies) provide PETE students the opportunity to interpret and give personal meaning to their experience (Connolly, 1994; Sherrill, 2004). Participation in practical experience also gives PETE students practice in reflective and critical thinking (Sherrill, 2004). It is assumed that reflective and
critical thinking are skills pre-service teachers will apply in future teaching (Sherrill, 2004).

The opportunity for a positive practical experience requires the collaboration of different individuals and groups (i.e. university faculty, parents, cooperating teachers). Their views and perceptions should be explored, not only the PETE students and instructors (Andrews, 2007). There is limited research that includes the different groups of participants within a PETE practicum program. Similar to the current study on PDC, Andrews (2007) investigated the perspectives of a university-based adapted physical education experience through three groups: undergraduate students who act as the teachers, children with disabilities, and parents of children with disabilities. Each participant has a different role in the physical education/activity experience. Future teachers (the undergraduate student) will need to make adaptations to lessons, skills, equipment, and environments to provide a positive and successful learning experience to all students. Children with disabilities will need to become self-advocates for their needs in physical activity. Lastly, parents provide support for their child and need to learn the modifications necessary for life skills.

The practical experience explored by Andrews (2007) took place at the Pediatric Exercise and Motor Development Clinic (PEMDC) at the University of Georgia. This clinic has been providing adapted physical education experiences for both the undergraduate students and the children with disabilities for more than 30 years. Undergraduate students have the opportunity to teach individuals with disabilities in a safe and constructive environment. The program is held on
Tuesday nights for one hour over nine weeks each semester. Prior to the start of the practical experience the undergraduate students attend several weeks of orientation. The clinic provides children with disabilities time to develop and improve skills in both a gym and aquatic setting. Through interviews, observations, and artifacts (i.e. self-teaching evaluation forms by the undergraduate students) the researcher explored how the participants were interpreting their experience. Three major themes emerged. The first theme was a connection with course content and how the university students applied that material to the clinical setting. The experiences within the clinic presented opportunities for the university students to apply the material they have learned to a practical setting (i.e. modify and teach lessons to different individual’s needs). The director of the clinic also taught the course which allowed for consistency between the two.

The second theme emphasized the importance of a caring environment within the clinic. Such an environment helped establish relationships, some even expanded outside the clinic setting. All three groups benefitted from the relationship. The children with disabilities felt comfortable and safe while working towards their goals. The parents expressed feelings of appreciation for the clinic, the personnel, and the services provided to their child. University students were able to build relationships with the parents which gave them a better understanding of their partner.

The third theme focused on contact time and its important role when teaching students with disabilities. Several university students became frustrated
because their partner was often absent or their attendance was inconsistent. Contact time was also affected when the child did not want to leave their parent or refused to participate in an activity. Lack of contact time noticeably affected the progress made with the undergraduate student and the partner.

The undergraduate students found the clinic experience to be positive and one that will help them both professionally and personally (Andrews, 2007). Findings may be used to make program changes, create new strategies to develop adapted physical activity programs, and benefit the development of teacher training programs. Physical educators today need to provide physical activity experiences to students of various abilities. It is assumed that providing PETE students with a practical opportunity in APA will translate into their teaching in years following their graduation and to reduce feelings of inadequate preparation (e.g. Folsom-Meek & Rizzo, 2002; Hodge et al., 2009; Lienert et al., 2001). Future research should focus on ways to provide PETE students with enough knowledge, preparation, and confidence to have lasting effects.

**Inclusion in Physical Education/Activity**

Inclusion is a “philosophy or an interactional process that facilitates individuals with and without disabilities working, playing, and learning together in positive, meaningful, and satisfying ways” (Sherrill, 2004, p. 52). The goal is for all individuals to have an equal opportunity regardless of their ability (Kasser & Lytle, 2005). The United States has passed legislations that require states to serve students with disabilities (i.e. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the
Education for All Handicapped Act, the Vocational Education Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and No Child Left Behind (NCLB)). These legislations emphasize the importance and priority to provide the necessary support that will allow all students to learn in a safe and successful environment. General physical education classes today in both the United States and Canada often include students with disabilities. However, there is a debate on whether inclusive settings are appropriate for all students with disabilities (Block, 1999). But the reality remains that physical education teachers have students with disabilities in their classes and it is important that they are prepared to teach in such inclusive settings.

Within education there are terms associated with inclusion, such as integration and the least restricted environment (LRE). Although some people use integration and inclusion interchangeably they are different. Integration is simply individuals with and without disabilities being taught in the same physical setting (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000). Whereas, inclusion is a belief that all individuals should have the opportunities regardless of ability and will be provided with the necessary support when appropriate (Avramidis et al., 2000). The concept of LRE, reflected in US legislation, has students taught in the most appropriate setting for their individual needs which can range along a continuum of restriction (Kasser & Lytle, 2005). In relation to physical education, the LRE allows those students with a disability who may not benefit from general physical education be placed in a smaller class or segregated setting where they can receive more individualized attention.
There are many perceived barriers that prevent successful inclusion in physical education, such as teachers feeling unprepared or inadequate to provide effective inclusion (Hodge et al., 2009; Hodge et al., 2004; Lieberman, Houston-Wilson, & Kozub, 2002), lack of time (Hodge et al., 2004; Lieberman et al., 2002), lack of necessary equipment (Hodge et al., 2009; Lieberman et al., 2002), large class size (Hodge et al., 2009), and lack of support (Hodge et al., 2009; Hodge et al., 2004). Although teachers may believe in inclusion, perceived barriers may change their attitudes towards teaching students with a disability (Hodge et al., 2009). Hodge et al. (2009) analyzed the beliefs that physical education teachers from various countries had towards inclusion and teaching students with a disability. Twenty-nine teachers who taught both students with and without a disability in their classes participated. Themes that emerged through the interviews were the teachers “compelling motives” to teach students with various abilities, whether they be intrinsic or extrinsic, and the “multiplicity of concerns” they believe relate to teaching students with a disability. In addition, findings showed that one teacher believed in full inclusion however struggled to accept teaching students with a disability. The difficulty the teacher experienced may have been because of inadequate training and lacked support to effectively teach students with a disability within classes (Hodge et al., 2009). Teachers may support inclusion, however when appropriate training and support are not provided, they may be less likely to practice it. Holding teachers responsible for professional development may increase their motivation and confidence to teach various abilities within a physical education class.
Research supports the importance of parental involvement for successful education of children with disabilities. Downing and Rebollo (1999) explored parent perspectives of essential factors for successful integrated physical education programs. They surveyed 100 parents of students with a physical disability who were in general education classes with their peers without a disability. The survey consisted of items that may relate to the child’s physical education experience, especially during the placement process (i.e. teacher support, communication, physical skills/ability, and age). Parents were instructed to rank the items in order of perceived importance to their child’s physical education program. Parents felt class size was the most important factor for successful integration. Class size was followed by teacher support, parent/teacher interest, parental support, health and well being, motivation, and administrative support. The findings suggest that parents are aware of the important aspects of a successful integrated environment in physical education and perhaps should be more involved in the decision making process of their child. The decision regarding physical education may focus on the LRE and the different support needed. Further research could focus on schools where parents do play an active role in their child’s physical education decisions and how that impacts the teacher and student.

Researchers (i.e. Hutzler, Fliess, Chacham, & van den Auweele, 2002; Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Kalyvas & Reid, 2003; Slininger et al., 2000; & Suomi, Collier, & Brown, 2003) have also found several positive aspects of inclusion when it is implemented successfully. Inclusion assists students without
disabilities to develop more positive attitudes towards students with disabilities (Slininger et al., 2000) and acknowledge how modifications assist their peers with disabilities (Kalyvas & Reid, 2003). In addition, inclusion provides students with disabilities an opportunity to develop and improve social skills (Suomi et al., 2003), develop feelings of empowerment (Hutzler et al., 2002), and feel a sense of belonging (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000). However, studies have also shown negative aspects of inclusion for students with disabilities such as restricted participation (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000), social isolation (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler et al., 2002; Place & Hodge, 2001), feelings of disempowerment (Hutzler et al., 2002), and the competence and understanding of students with disabilities being questioned (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000). Each student can have different experiences even within the same setting (Stewart, 1990).

Goodwin (2009) reviewed nine inclusive physical education studies that explored the views of children and youth with a disability. The children and youth who participated in these studies enjoyed participating in physical activity with their peers without a disability. However, inclusive physical activity environments can be both positive and negative experiences (Goodwin, 2009). Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) described the experience of students with physical disabilities in an inclusive physical education setting through “good days” and “bad days”. These nine students shared their personal experiences in small focus groups centered on the question: “What is the experience and meaning of inclusive physical education from the perspective of students with physical disabilities”
(Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000, p. 146). Themes that related to “good days” were a sense of belonging, skillful participation, and shared benefits (e.g. social relationships, improved strength). In contrast the “bad days” were expressed through social isolation, questioning of understanding and competence (e.g. peers would assume because the student was disabled they could not participate in physical activity), and restricted participation. The participants in this study preferred inclusive over segregated physical education because they felt that the positive aspects of inclusion were important (i.e. health benefits, social interaction with peers) (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000). Practitioners should strive to create an inclusive and positive learning environment for all students in physical education.

Regardless of the teaching environment whether inclusive, integrated, or LRE, the student as a whole individual should be the primary focus (Emes et al., 2002). Many factors contribute to providing a positive inclusive environment such as preparation of teachers (Hodge et al., 2009; Hodge et al., 2004; Lieberman et al., 2002), sufficient time (Hodge et al., 2004; Lieberman et al., 2002), necessary equipment (Hodge et al., 2009; Lieberman et al., 2002), and additional support (Hodge et al., 2009; Hodge et al., 2004). Inclusion is a philosophy that should be adopted by a school community to create equal opportunities throughout education for students of all abilities.
Case Studies

Case studies explore and capture experiences of phenomenon in a real life context which allow for true understanding (Inchley, Currie, & Young, 2000). In the current study the phenomenon is the practicum program PDC. Multiple data sources allow researchers to view certain programs or interventions from a variety of angles (Yin, 2009). A case study was chosen to explore PDC because of the different participants involved in the program (i.e. university students, teachers, and individuals with a disability). Capturing the views of all participants and using multiple data sources allowed PDC to be seen as both a practicum experience and a physical activity program.

A case study approach can be applied to programs for various purposes, for example, to assist with program evaluation, cater to multiple stakeholders involved in the program, and incorporate several data sources. The flexibility of a case study allows the researcher to mold the design to fit the program (Inchley, et al., 2000), which makes it valuable for a wide variety of educational programs.

Case studies are typically a method used in qualitative research (e.g. Akmal & Miller, 2003; Mule, 2006; Rovegno, 1992) but they can incorporate quantitative data (Hodge et al., 2009; Tjomsland, 2010). Through case studies researchers have investigated the revision and renewal of a secondary teacher preparation program (Akmal & Miller, 2003), how preservice teachers learn to reflect on teaching in physical education (Rovegno, 1992), beliefs physical educators have towards inclusion and teaching students with a disability (Hodge
et al., 2009), how an adapted physical education course influences PETE students’ ability to design and instruct (Perlman & Piletic, 2012), and how to sustain a comprehensive physical activity program in an elementary school (Tjomsland, 2010). In a qualitative case study the focus is on understanding the case itself and how it interacts with its context (Stake, 1995).

There are different ways to utilize a case study. Researchers are able to narrow their focus on the phenomenon of interest within a larger study (e.g. Hodge et al., 2009; Rovegno, 1992). For example, a case study by Hodge et al. (2009) focused on the beliefs physical education teachers had towards inclusion. That study was part of a larger series of studies which explored the beliefs of physical educators. Through the use of a case study the researchers placed emphasis on the beliefs towards inclusion and teaching students with a disability. In another case study, Akmal and Miller (2003) explored the phenomenon of change. During the revision and renewal of a US secondary education teacher preparation program, researchers used multiple data sources and various phases to determine what directly related to the process of change (Akmal & Miller, 2003). The exploration of a program in the natural setting allows for an in-depth look into its different components.

**The Case: PDC**

Project Double Challenge (PDC) is the practicum for the course Adapted Physical Activity (EDKP 396) at McGill University. The course is primarily for second year university students majoring in physical education and kinesiology.
The purpose of PDC for the university student is to provide the McGill student with the opportunity to work with individuals who have a disability, apply knowledge learned in class to a practical setting, develop skills in adapting physical activity to the needs and abilities of clientele, and to develop positive attitudes towards working with them.

PDC began in 1978 as Project McGill, a program which provided physical fitness, skill development, swimming, and group activities to adults. The following year the program was renamed Project Double Challenge and the adults were joined by children from a school in Montreal. Today, PDC is composed of participants from two schools and one worked-based program for adults. One of the schools is located in a suburb of Montreal and has a total of 65 students who range from 4 to 21 years of age and teaches students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The other school that attends PDC is a vocational school in Montreal where adolescents up to 21 years of age with developmental and intellectual disabilities have the opportunity to attend work-based programs within their educational plans. Lastly, the work-based program offers adults with intellectual disabilities a place to develop skills such as communication, self-expression, and creativity. Individuals involved in this program adhere to a typical work schedule and create embroidery pieces of art at their own pace. The two schools and work-based program have one thing in common; they value the importance of life experiences and physical activity. This past year (2012) there was approximately 110 participants in PDC who ranged from 5-55 years of age.
PDC has a unique structure to facilitate communication and permit McGill students to receive the support they need. The course instructor of EDKP 396 also serves as the program director; he teaches the course material to the McGill students, attends every PDC session, communicates with outside schools and programs involved in PDC, and ensures that the program runs smoothly. Two graduate student teaching assistants (TA) assist the course instructor with PDC and handle tasks such as pairing university students with a partner, communicating with personnel at the schools and the work-based program with regards to absences and requests, answering any questions the McGill students have throughout the semester, and grading. In addition to the graduate TAs, there are undergraduate TAs who followed the course in the previous year. In 2012 there were 10 undergraduate TAs who serve a supportive role to a group of 8-10 McGill students enrolled in EDKP 396. The role of an undergraduate TA is to answer questions, give feedback, and be there to support the McGill student throughout the semester. The course instructor, graduate TAs, and undergraduate TAs attend each session of PDC and are available to the McGill students when needed through e-mail.

Early in the semester McGill students complete an information sheet which is used to pair them with participants who have a disability. The McGill students have several options for placement beyond instructor within the on-campus practicum (PDC), although the vast majority of students are assigned to PDC. They can be a pool assistant for PDC, go to a local school to observe and assist the physical education teachers, or participating in a winter camp of three
days for students with disabilities. McGill students who choose to participate in the on-campus PDC program work one-on-one or two-on-one with an individual who has a disability creating and implementing a physical activity program. The role of pool assistant is also within the PDC program but requires the McGill student to have strong aquatic skills and knowledge. As a pool assistant the McGill student works with and assists their peers in the adaptation of aquatic activities but are not assigned a specific student with a disability for the program. They may work one-on-one with participants in the pool if the McGill student is particularly weak in swimming. For students who choose a school setting outside McGill, they collaborate with the physical education teacher to determine their role. In the past students in a school environment have worked one-on-one in the pool, adapted group games, and worked one-on-one towards student’s individual goals in physical education. Lastly, McGill students who participate in the winter camp assist students in the various aspects of camping. In addition the students may help adapt certain activities to an individual student. Although these options are different they give the McGill student an opportunity for hands-on experience working with individuals with a disability.

This study focused on the on-campus practicum PDC. PDC is held in the Currie Gymnasium Wednesday mornings in the winter semester with each student participating for two hours. Currie Gymnasium has a wide variety of facilities and equipment which the McGill students can utilize. The facilities available include gymnasium, field house, swimming pool, racquetball courts, fitness center, and individual fitness rooms. At the start of the program the McGill students assess
their partner’s ability in physical activity by informal assessment (i.e. criterion-referenced tools and checklists). Together, the McGill student and their partner develop a physical activity plan. The physical activity participants are encouraged to have input into activity selection. Including participants in the selection of activities is consistent with Blinde and McClung’s (1997) finding that the participant can develop a sense of control over their physical activity. For physical activity participants who are non-verbal or younger, additional input is provided by teachers and the activity plan is primarily created by the McGill student. The objective is that the activities challenge the participant but are also something they enjoy.

After initial observations and discussions are completed, the McGill student establishes four terminal performance objectives (TPO’s), achievements to be reached at the conclusion of PDC. Throughout the nine-week program, the McGill students and their partners work towards achieving all four TPO’s. Also, McGill students are required to reflect and write journal entries on their practicum experience on a weekly basis. Journals reveal how the McGill student relates knowledge from the course to PDC, includes personal feelings and attitudes about the program, partner(s), and personal involvement and reflections on teaching experiences (Connolly, 1994). Research has shown that reflections help give meaning to the practical experience (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2003). At the end of PDC, the goal is for McGill students to be more comfortable and confident in teaching individuals with disabilities in a physical activity setting.
In summary, everyone can benefit from physical activity. However, individuals with a disability are often less physically active than their peers without a disability (Rimmer & Rowland, 2008). Therefore research on programs that are successful in providing positive experiences to individuals with a disability is necessary to help increase their physical activity. PDC provides physical activity for individuals with a disability but also allows university students a hands-on experience in adapted physical activity. Current practitioners often feel unprepared to teach students with disabilities in physical education (Collier & Hebert, 2004). Previous research on practica have shown that positive experiences will provide attitude change and increase perceived competence towards working with individuals with disabilities (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2002; Piletic & Davis, 2010). Research should focus on how PETE programs prepare future teachers, specifically on teaching individuals with a disability. Through a case study, the researcher was able to explore both the physical activity and practicum aspects of PDC from the three different perspectives (i.e. McGill students, young adults with a disability, and teachers). The current study focused on how the participants perceived the PDC experience.
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Research Article

Abstract

This study investigated and described individuals’ perceptions of their experience with the practicum program Project Double Challenge (PDC). Three different groups were interviewed on their personal experience with PDC: the McGill student, the young adults with a disability, and teachers of students involved. An intrinsic case study was used. Additional data included observations, field notes, and program documents. The three groups of participants identified positive aspects of the program, communication, and learning as themes related to their PDC experience. However, each theme was expressed differently by each group. Overall, participants feel PDC is a positive environment that is improved through communication and provides a learning experience for everyone involved. Findings from this study can help understand how the program is contributing to the university, faculty, students, and the community.
Résumé

Cette étude a examiné et décrit les perceptions des individus de leur expérience avec le programme de stage Projet Double Défi (PDD). Trois groupes différents ont été interrogés sur leur expérience personnelle avec PDC: l'étudiant de McGill, les jeunes adultes ayant un handicap, et les enseignants d'élèves concernés. Une étude de cas intrinsèque a été utilisée. Des données supplémentaires inclus observations, notes de terrain, et les documents du programme. Les trois groupes de participants ont identifié les aspects positifs du programme, la communication et l'apprentissage comme des thèmes liés à leur expérience PDD. Cependant, chaque thème a été exprimée différemment par chaque groupe. Dans l'ensemble, les participants estiment PDD est un environnement positif qui est améliorée grâce à la communication et fournit une expérience d'apprentissage pour tous les participants. Les résultats de cette étude aideront à comprendre comment le programme contribue à l'université, les professeurs, les élèves et la communauté.
Introduction

Individuals with disabilities are significantly less active than their non-disabled peers (Bjornson, Belza, Kartin, Logsdon, McLaughlin, 2007; Steele et al., 2004; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Over the past decade there has been increased awareness that physical activity should play a larger role in everyone’s life. There are several benefits of physical activity for individuals with disabilities such as improved strength and functional performance (Blundell, Shepherd, Dean, Adams, & Cahill, 2003), ability to move with decreased energy requirements (Scheriber, Marchetti, & Crytzer, 2004), aerobic improvements (Lewis & Fragala-Pinkham, 2005), and a sense of belonging (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000).

Teachers and coaches often do not feel confident and competent to offer healthy physical activity to youth with disabilities (Connolly, 1994; Folsom-Meek & Rizzo, 2002; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995). Three strong predictors of increased confidence are previous experience with teaching individuals with a disability (Connolly, 1994; Hodge, Tannehill, & Kluge, 2003), educational courses in adapted physical education (Folsom-Meek, & Rizzo, 2002; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995), and perceived competence in teaching individuals with a disability (Hodge et al., 2003; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995). ‘Hands on’ experience and educational courses that provide future educators with the knowledge and skills to successfully teach youth with disabilities are thought to be vital in creating confident attitudes towards teaching those with a disability (Connolly, 1994; Folsom-Meek & Rizzo, 2002; Hodge et al., 2003; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995).
The majority of physical education teacher education (PETE) programs have one course in adapted physical activity (APA) (Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995) which may include a practicum. A practicum is defined by Emes and Velde (2005) as “an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills you’re acquiring in your Adapted Physical Activity course” (p. 4). Collier and Hebert (2004) explored preparation in PETE programs through surveys that provided space for the participants to write their opinions and suggestions. Physical Education teachers from K-12 expressed the value of hands-on experience. Through written comments practitioners strongly emphasized the importance of well-supervised practicum experiences. In other words practica should allow pre-service teachers to apply theory and knowledge learned in class to a real life setting and to receive feedback (Collier & Hebert, 2004).

The practicum in APA is often the first direct experience that PETE students have with individuals who have a disability. Piletic and Davis (2010) surveyed 136 university faculty members who taught APA courses in the United States. More than half of the participants (56%) stated that the main goal of the practicum was to present a hands-on opportunity resulting in positive attitude change when working with individuals with disabilities. The main purpose for the PETE students was to be directly involved in teaching and assisting the participants. It is assumed that if the practicum experience is constructive, the students will project a positive attitude and gain competence towards working with individuals with disabilities (Connolly, 1994; Hodge, Davis, Woodard, & Sherrill, 2002; Piletic & Davis, 2010).
During university PETE practicum experiences, students should focus on the abilities of the participants and view them as people first (Horvart, Eichstaedt, Kalakian, & Croce, 2003). Focusing on the individuals and their abilities will allow the university students to grow as teachers, and the person with a disability to explore their creativity and abilities while developing friendships and new interests in physical activity. It is assumed that the practicum environment allows university students to learn and use valuable skills that can translate into increased confidence.

Previous research on APA practica surveyed the attitudes of pre-service teachers displayed when working in that environment (e.g. Folsom-Meek & Rizzo, 2002; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995). Surveys, while useful, “provide a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population” (Creswell, 2003, p.153). In contrast, qualitative research captures an individual’s description, understanding, and meaning of a phenomenon (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2005). Therefore, the use of qualitative methods in APA may permit researchers to have a more complete view and understanding of the practicum experience.

There are many methods and approaches to qualitative research (Thomas et al., 2005) that allow researchers to capture a complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Examining individual experiences of a certain phenomenon may provide the researcher with more details and in-depth descriptions. Qualitative methodology can also be used to gather information from various groups allowing their experiences to be expressed (Connolly, 1994;
Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study

Kelly et al., 2006). For example, a physical activity program could be divided into three groups of individuals: the participant enrolled in the program, the instructor of the program, and individuals that make program decisions. By capturing the experiences of the three groups, the researcher will have an opportunity to better understand how the program impacts personnel involved.

Common methods in qualitative research are interviews, observations, and document and audiovisual analysis (Creswell, 2003). One type of document analysis is journals. Connolly (1994) examined journals of pre-service physical education teachers who worked with children who had disabilities. The journals revealed benefits from practicum interactions: the students were able to ignore stereotypes, treat their partners as individuals, and focus on abilities. Journals provide a place for pre-service teachers to reflect on their experiences and themselves (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2003).

Case studies are another method used in qualitative research (e.g. Akmal & Miller, 2003; Mule, 2006; Rovegno, 1992) and can also incorporate quantitative data (Tjomsland, 2010). The case study method allows the researcher to capture the phenomenon in its entirety by using multiple data sources (Yin, 1993; Yin, 2009). Through case studies researchers have investigated teacher education (Akmal & Miller, 2003; Mule, 2006; Rovegno, 1992) and physical activity programs (Tjomsland, 2010). In a qualitative case study the focus is on understanding the case itself and how it interacts with its context (Stake, 1995).

Programs with a practicum component are believed to be effective and there is some research that supports this assertion (e.g. Connolly, 1994; Hodge et
Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study 54

Changes in attitude and increased confidence and competence have been reported (e.g. Hardin, 2005; Nolan et al., 2000; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995; Stewart, 1990). Many practicum programs in APA are theoretically driven (e.g. Hodge et al., 2003). Contact theory is one theoretical approach incorporated into many APA practica, providing experiences that allow future teachers to interact with individuals with disabilities in a safe and structured environment. Gordon Allport began discussing contact theory in regard to prejudice in 1954. He argued that when contact was frequent, positive, and there was a common goal between parties, presumed attitudes and beliefs were easier to change. There are four criteria that ensure experiences and contacts are beneficial: all involved contribute equally, interactions occur regularly and have a purpose, experiences are natural and structured, and those involved enjoy support of the community (Allport, 1954). Teacher education provides many opportunities to use these criteria and implement the use of contact theory through practica or service learning projects.

In relation to APA, contact theory often guides research that focuses on how attitudes change when individuals without disabilities interact with individuals with disabilities (Hodge et al., 2003; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995; Slininger, Sherrill, & Jankowski, 2000; Tripp, French, & Sherrill, 1995). Contact theory is intended to contribute to development of positive attitudes and feelings of competence and satisfaction when working with individuals with disabilities (Hodge et al., 2003; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995). It is assumed that using physical
Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study

activity as a common goal should allow participants to interact positively, gain confidence, and benefit from the physical activity experience.

The Unified Physical Activity Program (UPAP) at Ohio State University is an inclusion based program that promotes physical activity through contact theory (Hodge et al., 2003). PETE students have the opportunity to work with a diverse group of youth to assist in building positive attitudes working in this environment. The program uses contact theory focusing on providing pleasant, cooperative, frequent, meaningful, and respectful experiences that are focused on common goals (i.e. a positive physical activity experience) (Hodge et al., 2003).

PETE practica require collaboration and organization between many groups to be successfully implemented. Programs that offer a practicum in APA have stakeholders such as individuals who enroll in the program, the university students taking the practicum, and the parents and/or adults who may chose the program for the participant. The current study will describe the outcomes of a practicum program from the perspectives of three groups: the McGill student, the young adult with a disability, and the teachers of the physical activity participants. Understanding how the different groups experience the program will provide important information that will guide recommendations for program change, help to understand how the program is contributing to the university, faculty, students, and the community, and establish future directions for the program. Exploring the insights of these individuals will assist the researcher in understanding how PDC is experienced.
PDC at McGill University began in 1978, and is a practicum program for the course Adapted Physical Activity (EDKP 396). This is an on-campus practicum that is taken mainly by second-year physical education and kinesiology students. The purpose of this program is to provide the McGill student with the opportunity to work with individuals with a disability, apply knowledge learned in class to a practical setting, develop skills to adapt physical activity to the needs and abilities of the clientele, and develop positive attitudes towards working with them. At the end of PDC, the goal is for McGill students to be more comfortable and confident in teaching individuals with disabilities in a physical activity setting.

Research has shown that positive practicum experiences will provide attitude change and increase perceived competence towards working with individuals with disabilities (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2002; Piletic & Davis, 2010). However, more research is needed that focuses on practicum programs as a whole and not solely from the university students’ perspective. The use of qualitative methods will better explain the “how and why” of a practicum program experience. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe the perceived outcomes of PDC. The insights and lived experiences of McGill students, young adults, and teachers were explored. The following general question guided this study: How do the participants perceive the PDC experience?

**Method**

This intrinsic case study, where the case is of primary interest, will allow PDC to be the focus of the study. Stake (1995) defines a case study as “the study
of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). A case study investigates a certain phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of data (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). For this study the phenomenon examined was PDC. Uncovering the details of the participant experience in PDC, gathering field notes from observations, and reviewing program documents, assisted the researcher to see the program from different points of view. Those multiple points of view helped the researcher better understand how the program works and affects the perceived outcomes.

**Participants**

The researcher observed PDC the previous year and found that three different groups of individuals played important roles in the program. These three groups of participants were chosen for interviews: McGill students, young adult participants in PDC, and teachers of physical activity participants in PDC. Informed consent from parents of adolescents and written assent from all participants were acquired. The goal was to capture and understand the experiences of participants involved in PDC. In addition to the interviews with the three primary groups, parents of participants who are attending PDC as a physical activity program were sent a questionnaire. The questionnaire provided parents with an opportunity to share what they felt PDC contributes to their child. This allowed the researcher to understand the program from different perspectives and help discover the perceived outcomes of PDC.
Participants were chosen using a criterion sampling technique, where all participants meet predetermined criteria of importance (Patton, 2002). For example, the young adults were students from a cooperating school located in Montreal, between 18-21 years old, and who had participated in PDC for at least two years. All young adults were part of a vocational program that provides skills to prepare them for jobs in the community. This group was selected because they have, in general, sufficient communication skills for the interview. The interview questions were reviewed by teachers of the students to ensure for the students would comprehend the questions. In addition, teachers were asked about the communication skills of the specific students selected to verify their ability to express themselves fully. Five young adults were randomly selected out of the nine interviewed, two females and three males.

McGill students majoring in physical education, who have previously taken EDKP 396 within two years, were interviewed. The two-year criterion was selected to ensure that this group had additional experiences teaching in schools since PDC. Current students were not interviewed because they were being graded by the organizer of PDC during the period when the research was being conducted. Three McGill students volunteered to participate in the study and all three were female.

The final group was composed of teachers from a cooperating school in a suburb of Montreal who have been involved with PDC for many years. Five teachers volunteered to be interviewed, four females and one male. Two of the teachers currently taught physical education at the cooperating school while the
others were classroom teachers. The years of experience with PDC ranged from one to fifteen. The sample of total participants was thirteen. The sample size is supported by Kvale (1996) who emphasizes that although data in small samples may not be easily generalized, the researcher is able to investigate in detail the relationship between the case and context.

**Study Design**

Yin (2009) identifies the importance of propositions to the case study. Theoretical propositions “direct attention to something that should be examined within the scope of the study” (Yin, 2009, p. 28). Theoretical propositions that guided the current research project were: low confidence levels of teachers and coaches teaching individuals with disabilities (Connolly, 1994; Folsom-Meek & Rizzo, 2002; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995), a positive practicum experience will result in positive attitudes when working with individuals with disabilities (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2002; Pletic & Davis, 2010), individuals with disabilities benefit from physical activity (Blundell et al., 2003; Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Lewis & Fragala-Pinkham, 2005; Scheriber et al., 2004), and using multiple sources of data will allow the researcher a more complete view of the phenomenon being studied (Akmal & Miller, 2003; Mule, 2006; Rovegno, 1992; Tjomsland, 2010). Propositions help guide the data collection process and help the researcher identify what to look for within the data (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009). These propositions identify areas of importance that directly relate to the context of this study.
Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval was received from the McGill Research Ethics Board, both cooperating schools, and the appropriate school boards before any data collection or recruitment began. Principals, participants, and parents of the young adults received a letter explaining the current study in detail and the researcher was available to answer any questions. It was important that the researcher clearly and truthfully explained the purpose of the study and how it might have impacted the participants (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Pseudonyms are used to ensure the identities of the participants were anonymous. Prior to the interview, participants were informed that they could opt to not answer any questions they are not comfortable with and refuse to participate in the study at any time.

Data Collection

A case study design encourages the use of multiple data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The data sources in this study were interviews, observations, program documents, field notes of PDC, and a parent questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews were one of the primary methods of data collection (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). Interviews provide the researcher with participant insight into how the participants benefit from the program, what aspects of the program are useful, and what they want to achieve from the program (Grypdonck, 2006). Semi-structured interview guides were created for each of the three groups (i.e., McGill students, young adults, and teachers). The use of semi-structured interviews allow for a “dialogue” to occur between the participant and the researcher (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The guides were designed
to lead the discussion but still allow flexibility for the participant to express what he/she felt was significant (Noor, 2008; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The perceptions of all individuals involved are unique to each experience and together provided a greater understanding of the entire program. Interviews were held at a location and time convenient for the participant. All interviews were tape recorded using a digital audio tape recorder.

In addition to interviews, the researcher attended PDC for five weeks in 2011 and every week in 2012 for observations and field notes. The observations were used for two reasons: to support the data from interviews and further understand how PDC operates. The researcher took short notes throughout the program each week. After each weekly session these notes were developed into more complete thoughts.

Program documents consisted of reflections and final reports from McGill students that were available in the APA laboratory and a previous program report written by Catherine Lair (2005) for an internship. The parent questionnaires were sent home with a letter explaining the study and a request to return the questionnaire to the school. Only one parent returned the questionnaire and because of this the researcher decided not to include the feedback in the data.

Data Analysis

Data from the audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim. The propositions stated earlier guided the data analysis (Yin, 2009). The researcher identified themes within the data “expressed by the participants” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 282). To begin, the researcher read through the data (e.g.
transcribed interviews, field notes, program documents) repeatedly to become familiar and develop a complete understanding. Next, recurring words and ideas were identified to create themes. This allowed the researcher to focus on words and phrases which were underlined. The researcher then coded the underlined section by writing a word representing a category in the margin (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The data were then recoded which changed existing categories and generated new ones. Main categories were then written on a summary sheet and are explained in the results.

**Trustworthiness**

Rossman and Rallis (2003) ask two questions in relation to trustworthiness: was the study done in a competent way, and was it done ethically? These two questions can be answered by focusing on three areas. First, the researcher must gain a complete understanding of the data and report it in a truthful way (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In the current study the researcher did the following to gain a complete understanding: attended PDC in 2011 for five sessions and every session in 2012, conducted member checks, and collected multiple sources of data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The second focus is on making sure the methodology can be confirmed (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In qualitative research this may include using a critical friend who forms their own conclusions when presented with the data collected (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) and pilot testing. The third focus should be on the usefulness of the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Usefulness was ensured by exploring how each group involved with
PDC experiences the program and identify possible changes that may be made to improve PDC overall.

Thomas et al. (2005) state that through the use of a pilot test “the interviewer can make sure that the vocabulary level is appropriate and that the questions are equally meaningful given the ages and educational backgrounds of the participants” (p. 281). The current study interviewed three different groups of individuals, all with different educational levels. The pilot tests allowed the researcher to practice her interviewing skills which included using probes and an audio recording device. The pilot test was also audio-recorded in order for the researcher to reflect and receive feedback from her supervisor and critical friend on her interview guide. In addition to a pilot test, the researcher performed member checks with the McGill students and the teachers interviewed. A transcript of the interview was e-mailed to each participant which allowed the researcher to assure it is what they intended to express. Participants were encouraged to read through the transcript and modify or change any information they felt necessary. Only two participants modified their response.

Finally, the use of a critical friend permits someone other than the researcher to become familiar with the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). A graduate student currently doing research in the field of APA will act as the critical friend in this study. This student was selected because of their knowledge and understanding of the current literature in APA. The critical friend reviewed and asked questions about the current study over its duration. The critical friend and researcher were able to discuss the interpretation of the data collected (i.e.,
emerging themes) and possible assumptions made by the researcher (Shenton, 2004).

In addition, the primary researcher took two courses related to research methods and will be able to apply the knowledge and skills learned. She spent time last year, 2011, observing PDC. Through observations, informal discussions, and interactions with participants she gained an understanding of how the program works. This year she also served as one of the head teaching assistants for PDC which allowed her to take part in the various levels of communication and see PDC from an insider’s view. Her role as a teaching assistant was to pair university students with their partners, answer questions that McGill students have throughout the program (specifically the pool assistants and a student completing the practicum off campus), and to communicate with a variety of individuals involved with the program (i.e. students, teachers of participants, program director). Previous experience with PDC and knowledge about qualitative methods make her a trustworthy researcher.

Results

Three themes emerged from the data: positive aspects of the program, communication, and learning. Each will be described through the PDC experiences of the McGill student, the young adult with a disability, and the teachers. The data in the result section are composed of participant interviews and final reports from past McGill student and supported by researcher observation and field notes.
McGill Students

In preparation for PDC. The course EDKP 396, that coincides with PDC, took place during the winter semester. On the first day students were given a placement sheet with several options. These included working with French speaking adults, adolescents and young adults, or young children and adolescents, as pool assistant, in a school option, or at a winter camp. The undergraduates ranked their top three choices. A TA then began the pairing process. There were five classes prior to the first day of PDC in which a vast amount of information was covered. Students were introduced to adapted physical activity and the following areas: person- first language, critical thinking, program content, assessment, goals and objectives, task analysis, teaching episodes and prompting, recording progress, reflections, instruction, and a general discussion about PDC (EDKP 396 course outline). In the first few classes students were nervous about PDC and posed questions about what to expect and how to handle a variety of possible scenarios. The material was new to many students and one of them expressed, “During the first three weeks of Adapted Physical Activity class I was introduced to concepts where I had little to no experience.” One student felt the information related to creating a physical activity program “went too fast about how you...individualize it.” However, other students found the course was complementary to the practicum, “it was really useful, the information was pertinent and it all kind of related back to the program (PDC).” Most of the McGill students felt that the course complemented the practicum component and helped create a positive learning environment.
The McGill students met with their assigned TA prior to the first PDC. During this time students received information about their partner, questions were answered, and contact information was exchanged between the McGill student and the TA. However, if the physical activity participant was new to the program the McGill student did not receive information, which often led to feelings of uncertainty. One student recalled feeling “super nervous because a lot of people get reports from the year before, I didn’t have anything so I was like oh my god what am I getting into, two hours that’s a long time.” As the first day of PDC approached, McGill students prepared activities and assessment strategies to complete over the first few meetings with their partner. During this time, TAs and the professor were available to answer questions and provide guidance to the students.

First meeting. On the first day of PDC the McGill students anxiously waited for the first meeting with their partner. Students expressed being “unsure”, “nervous”, “overwhelmed”, and “excited”, wondering what the next two hours would bring. One student recalled thinking, “whether my partner would like me, and if she would be friendly, outgoing, or shy.” Other students felt “prepared going into this practicum after having listened to several lectures presented on how to teach, assess, and interact with students with disabilities.” The environment was filled with mixed emotions.

The physical activity participants arrived and the TAs first met with classroom teachers. Together the TA and classroom teacher introduced the participants to their McGill student or “coach”. A brief conversation may have
occurred between the McGill student and the classroom teacher, usually consisting of important health or behavioral information. This conversation did not always occur or was too brief for some students. One student explained, “I was not able to formally meet with my student’s teacher. She quickly gave me two students and moved on to matching other students up with their instructors.” This brief meeting was an expression of communication between the McGill student and the classroom teacher. Both of whom felt more communication was needed throughout the duration of the program.

During the introductions the pool assistants anxiously awaited the activities to begin. Before everyone arrived, the pool assistants took the time to set out equipment they felt would be useful. One pool assistant recalled, “I just didn’t know what to expect, I didn’t know what I was supposed to do.” In regards to what anticipate and what equipment will be needed the program director explained that, “it depends on who is going to come to the pool today.” A student suggested providing, “a general list of who the participants are to the pool staff so they know that these are the populations we are going to be working with or these are the potential people who are going to come.” The pool staff felt that additional communication about who was attending PDC would assist them in the preparation of equipment.

On the first day many McGill students spent time learning about the interests of their partner. One student described, “For about the first 15 minutes I took the time to sit down with them and talk to them about all sorts of things.” Communication between the McGill student and their partner can facilitate input
into activities which may lead to self-determination towards physical activity for the participant.

Throughout the first day the activity spaces at the McGill sports complex were filled with university students and their partners. McGill students prepared activities for the day which would allow them to assess their partner and learn about their abilities in relation to physical activity. For some students it was difficult to follow their plan,

*The first day was kind of like a free for all. I was just literally trying to get him to focus on just anything because that was our biggest challenge. The first week I didn’t know anything about him so I came in and had all these activities planned and I realized this is not going to work, throw that out the window.*

Many students learned valuable information about their partner and how to prepare for future teaching experiences.

At the end of first day students felt, “accomplished”, “excited”, and “impressed”. All students felt they were better prepared after the initial meeting had taken place. A student expressed, “I did as many things as I could to try and figure out what he would like so that for next week I could plan a bit better.” Students’ feelings towards the next session were, “excited to come back next week” and “Next week I will have more confidence and a well planned out day now that I know what Jacob really enjoys.” Overall, it felt as though students were happy to have the initial meeting behind them. They learned about their partner, themselves, and were ready to begin planning an individualized physical
Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study

activity plan. One student shared, “I am looking forward to the challenges ahead”, which was an attitude many of the students developed over the first day.

Throughout PDC. Most students became more comfortable in the PDC setting as the weeks passed. Two students expressed, “the first day was the first day and after that I kind of warmed up to my role.” and “It definitely took, I would say four weeks, before I was comfortable and knew what I was going to do.” However, some student experiences differed from week to week, “I had a very challenging child and some weeks were awesome and some weeks we did nothing.” Even for the students who had a more challenging partner, they learned how to adapt more effectively over time.

Many McGill students believed they built a fine instructional relationship with their partner. One student felt, “By the end I got to know him, he got to know me, which was nice. Even if the week didn’t go well I knew it wasn’t either one of us.” Students felt that the opportunity to build a relationship with their partner was a positive aspect of the program stating,

It also gives them (the physical activity participant) a chance to bond with someone else, feel special for those two hours especially if their one-on-one. They get this time for two hours to be the focus of this one person’s attention which a lot of time they don’t get.

PDC provided an important learning environment for the McGill students. One student stated, “I learned to develop communication skills. Words are not necessarily the perfect way to communicate. With Jessie, I had to limit my words and increase the visual support. I even used drawing to make her understand
what I meant.” McGill students also felt PDC allowed them to learn how to make adaptations, “Jacob helped me learn many ways of teaching different types of movements.” Material learned in the course was also applied to the practicum experience. For example,

Basic stuff like things that could trigger tantrums and stuff we learned in the class like too much noise, too much light, or too much going on I didn’t necessarily always realize that before. The first two times I brought him in the big gym, he wouldn’t do anything he would just wander, so I took the information I learned and took him to a quieter place and I found it really helped.

Students were required to write a reflection after each PDC session. Many students found the reflections helpful, one student expressed, “it makes you think about what you’re doing because if you’re not writing a reflection you’re just going through the motions every week. If you don’t ask yourself questions then you’ll never give yourself any answers.” Another student felt that reflections do help “because then I can say ‘okay why didn’t this work, that’s why’. So I go back to my notes or go back to my expertise and try to find a different way to help her (their partner) improve it.” Students also found it difficult to write reflections certain weeks,

The weeks that went really well I was able to reflect back and say ‘this is what we did and it went really well’...But then there are the weeks that he didn’t do anything and I just felt like I was kind of repeating myself...I
didn’t feel like I had much to write about because we didn’t get much done and I really didn’t know why.

Whether students found the reflections helpful or not, it provided them with the opportunity to reflect on their teaching and how it evolved throughout the program.

**Last day of PDC.** The final day of PDC arrived and the emotions were very different from day one. The anxieties from the first day were replaced by students feeling, “eager”, “proud”, and “sad to see it end.” Over the ten week program the McGill students developed a relationship with their partner(s). On the last day of PDC McGill students and their partner worked on reaching TPOs for a final time and enjoyed participating in physical activity together to celebrate their hard work and accomplishments.

**PDC overall.** Students expressed learning both life skills and how to adapt physical activities from PDC. One student shared,

*I feel that I have grown a lot, learned so much and broadened my versatility in ways I did not know I could. I planned ahead, but accepted the unexpected, I was challenged with new feats and forced to use my critical thinking skills.*

Students also felt that additional support during the practicum experience was needed, “The program can offer...extra support sessions for the students who are having a difficult time.” Communication between the TA and their McGill students is important to ensure everyone has the support when needed to help create a positive practical experience.
McGill students found PDC beneficial, especially to individuals with no previous experience working with individuals with a disability. A student stated, “I think they (the McGill student) get exposed to the population or the different kinds of disabilities or learning disorders...it opens the doors and makes them realize that not everybody’s able to do everything.” Another student felt that PDC was important for future teaching experiences,

_I think for a lot of the people, especially my friends in the program who have never worked with kids with special needs it’s really important for them to at least get this...a bit of an eye opener before they get thrown into a class with forty kids and have these kids with special needs in the forty kids._

McGill students found PDC to be a beneficial part of their education experience. “Just seeing more specifically what different disabilities are” allowed the McGill students to better understand the variety of adaptations and individual needs within adapted physical activity.

**Post PDC.** Students who took PDC two years prior to this study have had additional teaching experiences with individuals who have a disability. They were asked if PDC helped prepare them for those experiences. Students shared “I was able to better adapt my lesson plans and my evaluation criteria. When I was in the gym I would write my lesson plan not only thinking about the ambulatory students but all the students.” and “I know it helped me.... in my other job, that I know all about the different types of special needs and their characteristics and the different things to do, how to help them.” One student felt it was great for one-on-
one adaptations but not necessarily for inclusive settings; stating, “It was great learning to modify something for one child but not necessarily in terms of applying it ... a classroom where you have 30 kids and 28 without special needs and then the two that need serious modifications.” PDC provided students with resources and knowledge of where to find information, a student explained that, “The text books that we had, journals, and the articles...I know where I can find them and can access them.” One student felt “Well enough prepared...but because I have experience aside from it (PDC) that made a difference.” McGill students agreed that previous experience with individuals with a disability in addition to PDC better prepared them for future teaching.

The Teachers

In preparation for PDC. The school community prepared for PDC at the start of the school year by fundraising towards the transportation to McGill. The teachers at the school began preparation for PDC by completing information forms about each student. The teachers may include student diagnoses, whether to be paired with a male or female coach, any behavioral concerns, important medical and health information, and how best to communicate with a student (similar information is also received from the other cooperating school and work based program). This form was sent to McGill and was first used to assist the graduate TA pairing the McGill students with a partner. The graduate TA was in contact with the cooperating school several times throughout the pairing process to make changes and confirm details. Once pairings were complete, the information form was given to the appropriate McGill student. One teacher stated,
“I think it’s helpful in the beginning, for us to fill out forms to give the students at McGill an idea of where the kids are from year to year.”

Another way the teachers prepare for the first day of PDC is to provide McGill students with tools that can help with communication, focus, and comfort. A teacher explained, “The kids that I had before this year...I provided visual schedules for them because it helped them. I know in this setting it helps the kids to transition between activities and especially with new people.” However, the teacher felt “it was well received by some students at McGill, not well received by others, and some of them didn’t understand it.” All teachers shared the same feeling, “I don’t think we have enough time to talk to the coaches.” Teachers suggested that meeting with the McGill students before PDC and throughout would allow them to explain tools, give information, and answer any questions. In addition, all teachers believed it would be beneficial for the McGill students to visit the cooperating school prior to PDC, “It’s one thing seeing a profile of a student on paper and it’s one thing to actually deal with them, so even if they come in a day and see the student in the school setting.” Teachers found this visit would be beneficial to both the McGill students, the students at the cooperating school, and themselves.

**First meeting.** Leading up to the first day of PDC teachers expressed how their students were feeling, “all of the kids are unbelievably ridiculously excited to go to McGill, they absolutely love it”. Teachers discussed how students would repeatedly ask, “When does the McGill week start?” and were always prepared for the first day. “When we’re going the kids are excited. They get their bags
A teacher described the bus ride, “On that first bus ride to McGill there’s anticipation for both our students and staff. We’re not certain who the coach will be and whether the coach and the student will be a good match.”

Once the school bus arrived at McGill, a graduate TA met them and led the students and teachers to the meeting area. After brief introductions from the professor, the teachers found the TA they would work with and began pairing students with their coaches. One teacher described the first meeting, “It’s amazing when you first get there. When both the student and McGill student meet it’s the same for both of them. I am quite certain there is anticipation and apprehension for them (the McGill student) as well.” At this time the teacher may have briefly spoken to the McGill coach to inform them of any information they feel is important. However, the teachers felt, “it would probably be a good idea to have the McGill students meet with the teachers a little bit more.” Teachers believe that a prior visit to their school may help facilitate the opportunity for communication between them and the McGill coach.

A few teachers also shared that “We’re really protective of our kids, we kind of hand them over and it’s just like we don’t know what the other person thinks” and “I think sometimes our staff here can be intimidating with the knowledge that they have about the students. We often forget that we have had that much more experience, that the McGill students are just learning.” In regards to the McGill student in the learning process one teacher stated, “Although the McGill students are learning, it would be a good idea for them to take the advice
Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study

from the teacher or technician if suggestions are made regarding certain students. The information might prove to be useful to them in order to help them achieve better results in the then weeks.” But teachers also believe, “there are times however that our staff needs to learn to step back and allow the McGill student to make those errors so that they learn from them, which is a big part of teaching.” One teacher explained that she “tries to be available but not to be overbearing at the same time.” PDC can be a learning experience for both the McGill students and the cooperating school teachers.

Once the McGill students pick-up their partner the teachers typically spent the rest of the day walking around the facilities, available to both their students and the McGill students. Some teachers liked to document the first day, “all of our technicians, all of our teachers they walk around with cameras taking pictures.” Teachers also had discussions with the director and/or the TAs throughout the day. The goal was to make the first day run smoothly for both the participants and McGill students.

**Throughout PDC.** Throughout the ten weeks the teachers took the opportunity to integrate PDC into the school system. Some teachers would create writing activities responding to questions like, “what was the best part of your McGill morning with your coach? What kind of activities did you do?” Another teacher expressed that her class “made a photo album every afternoon that we’d work on which was going to be a portfolio to bring home to mom and dad so they could see what activities their children were doing.” Most of the teachers agreed
that they “definitely take what we (the school) do at Double Challenge and we apply it back at school to make it a complete learning experience.”

The teachers felt strongly about the one-on-one or two-on-one attention their students received.

*I think it’s wonderful because they get to have a one-on-one program that’s really catered to who they are and what they need. It’s very rare that they get to work one-on-one with anyone. At our school we don’t have the option as there is one physical education teacher per eight to twelve students in a class.*

A teacher provided an example of how individualized attention benefitted a particular student.

*One boy who is in a wheelchair, he can actually walk but most of the time he’s in a wheelchair. They had somebody one-on-one so he could actually go swimming and do those other things, when you don’t have a one-on-one a lot of times you can’t do those things with him.*

The individualization of the physical activity program is a positive aspect of PDC which helps facilitate learning for both the physical activity participant and the McGill student.

Teachers also expressed parents’ appreciation for the small McGill coach to participant ratio at PDC. “*Parents love it. Having their child receive that important one-on-one physical time is amazing for them.*” One teacher shared, “*I did have some parents ask what they (the participants) were doing.*” This teacher
also suggested that sending information home about what activities the students do each week may keep parents informed.

The personal attention the physical activity participants received allowed the teachers to see a relationship grow with their students and the McGill coaches, “In the first week everyone is a little tense but once in the second week you see that a relationship has already established between the two.” Many teachers see the opportunity to build a relationship as a positive aspect of the program. “It’s a benefit for both and I’ve seen it before where the kids really start to have a nice relationship with the McGill student and vice versa; it brings a smile to your face.” “I think another benefit would be the relationship that the students establish with their student coach and the trust that develops between them.”

The teachers identify other positive aspects of PDC as additional physical activity and a variety of new physical activity opportunities. One teacher explained, “The fact that they’re able to have that extra day of activity with a student coach working one-on-one with them will help them to become better fit while introducing them to new activities.” Another benefit is to gain self confidence. Teachers expressed that their student’s “self confidence is increased because they see their development as they go along,” and “because they get the one-on-one.”

Communication with different personnel involved in PDC was something the teachers felt was important. Throughout the program teachers felt that “one of the things that could be improved from the McGill students would be the
communication between themselves and the teacher who has their student (the participant).” The communication does not always need to be verbal.

On that Wednesday morning when they come and get their student, the visual contact is very important between the two (teacher and McGill student). As a teacher we need to know that our student is safe. Just a quick acknowledgement that they are taking the student would be helpful.

In addition to communicating with the McGill student, teachers feel it is also important to communicate with other PDC personnel. This past year, a graduate TA was the primary contact for cooperating schools when relaying student information, a teacher shared,

I thought it went really well this year communicating with you, with one person there and one person from our school. Being able to let you know who was going to be absent so that you can inform your coaches so they were more organized that morning.

Another teacher suggested that McGill should also inform the school when coaches are absent. She felt “if we know ahead of time we can prepare” our students. In addition, teachers felt the instructor of the program was available to “talk to the staff, talk to the teachers, watch the TAs, and get a feel for the program...he was always available for us to speak to if there were any issues.”

Communication between all personnel involved with PDC allowed for the program to run efficiently and helped create a positive learning and physical activity environment.
**PDC overall.** The teachers overall felt PDC is a positive program for their students. “I think there is a real need for this program. We’d love to be here all year round.” and “It’s such a source of enjoyment for these kids...I think it’s wonderful and I hope it doesn’t stop.” Teachers believe the program not only benefits their students but the McGill student as well. A teacher explained,

> I believe that a course like Double Challenge better prepares the McGill student for what may be expected in a school. It challenges the McGill student to modify activities on the fly for students who are struggling in a physical or intellectual way. Adapting the activity to the needs of the student is very important...I think for the McGill students, it opens their eyes to the special needs community in general...At the end of the Double Challenge program I believe the McGill students come away with a new understanding for special needs students and have learned patience in the process.

**The Young Adults**

**In preparation for PDC.** Before the start of PDC the head teacher at the other cooperating school sends McGill a list of the students who will be attending the program. The list also includes suggested pairings because the physical activity participants from this school typically are paired with the two of them working with one McGill student. Student diagnosis, and important medical and health information is also included. The graduate TA used the information to pair McGill students with the dyads. Through the pairing process the head teacher at
the school was in contact with the graduate TA at McGill about changes and questions that arose.

The week before PDC began a group of young adults came to McGill and a TA gave them a tour of the facilities. During the tour the TA also explained what to expect on the first day and what the students should bring. Students were able to express any concerns they had. This prior visit allowed the physical activity participants to determine what transportation to use to arrive at McGill on time, familiarize themselves with the facilities, and ask any questions.

**First meeting.** The first day began for the young adults by either meeting at school or at the predetermined bus stop to commute to McGill together. After arriving at McGill they went to the meeting spot and waited for the program to begin. The young adults did not share any anxieties towards the start of PDC. On the first day the head teacher from the cooperating school called out the pairings (physical activity participants with McGill student) and shared any necessary information with the McGill student. After the pairs were introduced they began their physical activity experience.

On the first day many young adults described that they “sat down” with their McGill coach “and got to know each other, what we like to do, what we don’t like to do.” Throughout the first day the young adults provided input to activities, a student stated, “In the beginning actually he (the McGill student) asked us like what is it that you’re really good at, is there anything that you need to work on, something challenging.” Another student discussed his ability and comfort level related to physical activity with their coach,
I said to him that I’m not very active person so we have to go slowly...we don’t have to begin at a high level because I will not do it because I know what I’m capable to do. So together we arranged a program and agreed with each other.

Communication played an important role in the first day of PDC and allowed the physical activity participant to feel comfortable and provide input. The first day included introductions, physical activity, and getting to know one another. By the end of day both the young adults and McGill students appeared eager for the next session.

Throughout PDC. In the first two sessions of PDC the McGill student, with the help of the young adult, created terminal performance objectives (i.e. individual goals) to work towards throughout the program. The objectives were usually related to physical activity, one pair shared, “for our individual goals he worked on his football skills and I worked on my sprinting skills.” Physical activity participants worked with their McGill student on their individual goals one-on-one and in groups. Many young adults mentioned enjoying both the individual and social component of the program. One physical activity participant shared, “I like a little bit to just practice and then go with everyone else because I need to practice.” The terminal performance objectives allow the young adult to work on fundamental skills that can be related to both individual and team recreation/sports.

During PDC the communication between the young and their McGill partner continued, for example a physical activity participant stated “I say to my
trainer I was a little bit stressed and I would like to do yoga. He says he didn’t know yoga but he could try to search about that...he searched...and we did it together.” The same participant felt the program was too difficult and suggested an alternative solution to their McGill coach,

I told my trainer if we can switch...because we were doing like all in one session, so I tell him if you want we can follow these activities...but we can do something in this week and something that we did this week we’re not going to do next week. Because I can’t do like that whole thing that I’m doing now in one day.

Communication is an important part of PDC, it allows the young adults and McGill student to be aware of how the other one thinks and feels. This contributed to both the young adult and McGill student having a positive experience throughout the duration of PDC.

Physical activity participants felt they received support from their McGill coach throughout the program. One expressed, “The trainers were nice and they were encouraging it helps.” Another participant needed their McGill coach to push them, “I like it because it’s exercising and you know people push me more too because when I’m by myself I don’t push myself as much. I try but I need to be a little bit pushed.” Working one-on-one or two-on-one with a McGill coach provided the young adults more individualized attention and support. The young adults were able to focus on areas related to physical activity they felt needed practice.
PDC overall. The young adults believed they learned a variety of physical, social, and life skills from PDC. “I learned to be more active...sociable with people...to travel by bus.” All physical activity participants shared examples of specific sport skills learned, such as “basketball because it’s hard to shoot. I learned how to shoot the normal way because I use to just throw it but now I know how to throw it and aim it into the goal.” and “For a goalie, kneel a bit like not totally kneel but bend a little and try to move side to side because they might shoot on the corner (in relation to soccer).” Students also expressed learning life skills. One young adult stated that he “learned to be more sociable with the people” and emphasized that “you need listening skills when you receive so many directions from your instructor you never know what will be important.”

The opportunity to work with a McGill student who is knowledgeable in physical activity and exercise was a positive aspect of PDC for the young adults. One physical activity participant stated, “I have a personal coach that’s an amazing thing, you know I think that’s a privilege that not everyone can have so I think that’s amazing.” Another participant experienced both working one-on-one in 2011 (one physical activity participant to one McGill student) and two-on-one in 2012 (two physical activity participants to one McGill student) and she felt that when she worked one-on-one “it was more attention and I exercised more and I focused on what I need more.”

In addition to the more individualized attention, the facilities and variety of activities offered were also positive aspects. A young adult shared, “I really enjoy it because you know everything in the gym they provide many programs.”
Another explained that she did not have access to certain equipment outside of PDC, “At home I don’t really have access to a basketball net and the weight machines so it’s good.”

Overall the young adults had positive feelings towards their experience with PDC, “It’s been a good experience, I love McGill.” and “I love it, it’s the best, and I recommend it to everyone.” The young adults looked forward to attending PDC each year. One stated, “I hope next year our school will be chosen again and I could go again to meet a new person, a new trainer that I think is going to be fantastic.” PDC is both an enjoyable and learning environment for the physical activity participants.

Summary

The three groups of participants identified positive aspects of the program, communication, and learning as themes related to their PDC experience. However, each group expressed each theme differently. McGill students identified gaining experience working with individuals with a disability, providing one-on-one instruction, an opportunity to reflect on teaching, the chance to build a relationship with their partner, and the variety of activities available as positive aspects of PDC. The teachers believed that student enjoyment, a physical activity program catered to the student’s individual needs, the opportunity to build a relationship, students gaining additional physical activity, the variety of activities offered, and the increase in their student’s self confidence to be the positive aspects of this program. The young adults with a disability who participate in PDC felt the positive aspects of the program were
working one-on-one with a McGill student knowledgeable in physical activity, enjoyment, an opportunity to use facilities, the variety of activities offered, and social interaction. The groups as a whole had mostly positive feedback about PDC.

Communication plays an important role in PDC. For the McGill students communication provided a sense of support from the TA, instructor, and classroom teacher. The majority of McGill students felt that communication between themselves and both the classroom teacher and TA should be increased. In addition, the university students said it was important to communicate with their partner throughout the program to help make the experience enjoyable and beneficial for them both. In regards to communication, to prepare for PDC the classroom teachers provide McGill with important student information and create tools to assist their students during the program. Throughout the program the teachers believe additional opportunities for communication between themselves and the McGill students was needed. The teachers also stressed the importance of communicating with other PDC personnel (i.e. TAs and instructor) in order for the program to benefit the participants and improve over time. Lastly, the young adults with a disability enjoyed providing input into activities and feel comfortable communicating any questions or concerns they may have with their McGill partner.

PDC is a positive learning environment for all participants. As a university’s adapted physical activity practicum PDC provides the McGill students an environment to apply material learned in the course, develop
Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study

communication skills, an opportunity to reflect on their teaching, and gain hands-
on experience working with individuals with a disability in a physical activity setting. In regards to learning some McGill students felt there was a vast amount of new information and it was too much to learn over one semester. In addition, students felt more support throughout the semester (i.e. TA office hours) was needed. Teachers also feel PDC is a beneficial program where the McGill students gain experience for future teaching and have the support of the classroom teachers, TAs, and their instructor. To enhance the learning experience for the McGill students the teachers believe a trip to the cooperating school prior to the start of PDC will provide the university students an opportunity to view their partners in a school environment. The teachers at both cooperating schools also integrate PDC into the school curriculum to create a complete learning experience for their students. As a physical activity program PDC provides an environment where the participants can practice and improve physical, social, and life skills. Overall, participants feel PDC is a positive environment that is improved through communication and provides a learning experience for everyone involved.

Discussion

The data in this study described the participants’ perceived outcomes of a university’s adapted physical activity practicum. Three themes emerged: positive aspects of the program, communication, and learning as characteristics of the PDC experience. However, each group applied their own meaning to the themes. For example, the McGill students learned different information and skills than did
the young adults with a disability. Through the exploration of PDC from three
different perspectives a more complete picture of the program was portrayed.

**Theme One: Positive Aspects of PDC**

All program participants felt that the one-on-one/two-on-one attention
and the variety of activities, equipment, and facilities available were positive
aspects of PDC. The individualized aspect helped the McGill student develop the
skills and knowledge needed to adapt physical activities to varying abilities. In
addition, the low instructor to partner ratio allowed for a relationship to build
between the McGill student and their partner. Connolly (1994) stated that the
relationship built during a one-on-one practica in APA provides the university
student with an opportunity to apply meaning and experience difference.

McGill students also expressed feeling less prepared to modify and adapt
activities in an inclusive group setting because their experience in PDC had a low
instructor to partner ratio. This individualized environment can be a beneficial
when learning how to modify activities for an individual with a disability however
often times physical educators teach in a more inclusive setting. PETE programs
could provide students an opportunity to work both one-on-one and within an
inclusive adapted physical activity setting throughout their education.

The young adults with a disability enjoyed having an individualized
physical activity plan and a “personal trainer” who provided guidance and
encouragement. The support and feedback they received from their McGill
partner was empowering and motivated them to push themselves. Blinde and
McClung (1997) also found that participants with a physical disability enjoyed having a partner without a disability throughout the recreation program. In addition, through participation in recreation the individuals with a disability were empowered physically and socially (Blinde & McClung, 1997). The young adults recalled learning proper form, safety, and rules related to different exercises and sports. In addition, the young adults expressed being able to apply what they learned in the program to other aspects of their lives, which lead to additional physical activity experiences. Similar to the findings of Blinde and McClung (1997) participants were able to transfer the information and skills they learned to enhance their physical lives.

The teachers believed their students greatly benefit from individualized attention; it increases the amount of physical activity in which they participate, helps build relationships, and caters to their unique needs. All teachers strongly suggested offering the program throughout the entire school year; therefore their students would receive additional one-on-one physical activity. Similar findings by Andrews (2007), but with parents of individuals with a disability opposed to teachers, stated appreciation for the personal instruction and desire for the program to be offered more frequently to provide additional instruction and possible skill progression.

McGill University’s facilities and equipment provided PDC participants an opportunity to take part in a wide variety of recreational activities and exercise. Throughout the program the young adults were exposed to new activities and were able to exercise without paying membership fees. Limited access to fitness
facilities and high membership fees are common barriers for the young adults who participate in PDC (Rimmer et al., 2004). All participants felt the facilities and equipment McGill supplied was an asset to the program. Providing a variety of activities and choice paired with an individualized program may lead to the participants developing characteristics of self-determination (Robinson & Lieberman, 2004).

Each group of participants identified additional positive aspects that applied to their unique role in PDC. Most McGill students and the teachers felt PDC was a valuable hands-on experience which could be applied to future teaching. This supports Collier and Hebert’s (2004) finding that teachers valued the importance of hands-on experience within teacher education programs. Approximately 55% of students with a disability are taught in general education classes in Canada (Uppal, Kohen, & Khan, 2007) therefore physical education teachers will likely teach students with a disability. Hodge et al. (2003) found that providing pre-service teachers experience working with these students prepares them to adapt lessons and activities for future teaching. In addition to hands-on experience, the McGill students believed that journaling about their practicum provided them with the opportunity to reflect on teaching for the duration of the program. Previous studies have found that self-reflective journaling within teacher education helps students develop critical thinking, identify issues, and adapt their lessons and/or teaching (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2003).

Teachers found PDC to be an overall beneficial program for both their students and the university students. Yet, the teachers felt if they had more contact
time with the university students they could provide them with more helpful information and support. Hardin (2005) interviewed beginning physical educators who also felt other teachers were a valuable source of knowledge when learning how to teach students with a disability. Increasing contact time between the university students and cooperating teachers would give them an opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions, and share experiences working with individuals who have a disability.

The young adults who participated in PDC felt that the program helped decrease barriers to physical activity. Some examples of possible barriers are cost, limited equipment, and lack of knowledge (Rimmer et al., 2004). Similar to the findings of Blinde and McClung (1997) the young adults enjoyed the company and guidance of the McGill student. Participation in exercise and recreational activities with the support of a McGill student was a positive aspect of PDC for the young adults. Support was identified as motivation, encouragement, and teaching. The young adults appreciated the opportunity to be physically active. For the researcher, positive comments about PDC from teachers, university students, and physical activity participants reinforced that PDC was beneficial to all participants.

**Theme two: Communication**

A university practicum program may include university faculty and students, cooperating teachers and students, and community members, therefore communication is important. Participants identified several occasions where
communication enriched their PDC experience. The first aspect of communication was between the university and the cooperating schools/work based program. This ensured that throughout the ten weeks PDC will run smoothly and all personnel were aware of pertinent information and changes such as the pairings of university students and physical activity participants. The McGill students felt communication with their instructor, TA, and the cooperating teachers provided them with necessary information and support during the APA practicum. Communication was an important theme in Andrews’ (2007) research in which parents provided a source of information and support to the university student. Future research could explore the different roles of communication in an university practicum program.

There is limited literature relating to the role of communication within practical experiences in PETE. Research on teacher education has explored communication between the university student and cooperating teacher (i.e. Haigh, Pinder, & McDonald, 2006; Pinder, 2008) and how preservice teachers communicate with students (i.e. Peralta & Burns, 2012). McGill students, with the help of cooperating teachers, learned different ways to communicate with individuals who have a disability. Cooperating teachers provided both their student and the McGill student with appropriate tools that prepared them to communicate during PDC. For example, visual schedules provided by the teachers allowed the McGill students to explain the order of activities to their partner. Previous research has found that feelings of negative emotions and stress decrease when the university student had a positive relationship with the
cooperating teacher and students with whom they are working (Pinder, 2008). Communication is related to building relationships and is an important part of becoming a teacher. Research on communication in PDC will assist both the university student and the cooperating teachers with questions, relaying important information, and creating a positive experience for everyone.

The communication between the McGill student and their partner during PDC made both individuals more comfortable throughout the ten weeks. The young adults would discuss their interests, feelings, and comfort level towards physical activity with their partners. Through communication the young adults were able to provide input into the activities chosen for their individualized plan and express any concerns or difficulties. Providing input and selecting their own activities may lead to a sense of control for the young adults, which may lead to additional physical activity experiences outside of PDC (Blinde & McClung, 1997).

**Theme three: Learning**

PDC is a learning environment for both university students and young adults. McGill students developed skills and knowledge related to APA through course work and hands-on experience. Students in the present study found that being able to apply material learned in the course to the practical setting was helpful. Some students who had never worked with individuals with a disability found it difficult to follow their lesson plan. Over time, they were able to interpret their partner’s behavior more effectively and make adaptations on the spot.
Similar to previous findings (i.e. Hardin, 2005; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995) the McGill students appeared to be more confident and competent in the field of APA after the course and ten week practicum. Overall, the McGill students believed the practical skills they learned such as lesson planning, how to make modifications, and critical thinking were valuable to their future experiences in teaching. These findings are consistent with Collier and Hebert’s (2004) study which stated that course work paired with hands-on experience is an opportunity for individual and professional growth for the university student.

Students also felt the amount of information was too much to acquire over one semester. A suggestion made in the Lair (2005) report was to extend the APA course over two semesters with the second semester involving the practicum component. This might remain a logical conclusion of the current research. However, depending on the university this may not be possible. Other research has recommended infusion within PETE programs (i.e. DePauw & Goc Karp, 1994; Hardin, 2005) in which information on how to teach students with a disability would be integrated throughout the curriculum. Infusion may reduce the feedback that the amount of content in EDKP 396 is excessive.

The young adults expressed learning both physical and social skills throughout the program. PDC provided the young adults a space to practice skills related to games, recreation, and sports while socially interacting with their peers and partners. Blinde and McClung (1997) identified participating in the community, exposure to new activities, and meeting new people as the foundations to physical and social growth. It seems PDC is consistent with those
ideals. To complete the learning experience, teachers at both cooperating schools felt it was important to integrate PDC into the school system. Examples of how teachers integrate PDC include creating photo albums, writing assignments where the student reflects on their experience at PDC, and having the student’s discuss their morning at PDC with the class. Future research could focus on how an APA practicum impacts individuals with a disability who participate in physical activity and ways in which the program can be part of cross-curricular initiatives.

Overall, this study found all participants identified positive aspects, communication, and learning as important components of their PDC experience. PDC as both a university practicum and a physical activity experience has several key elements that help the program interact with its context. First, the university, both cooperating schools, and the work based program have been involved with PDC for many years and therefore we assume they believe in physical activity. Secondly, the one-on-one/two-on-one instruction helped create an individualized APA environment for the university student to practice teaching and for the young adults to receive attention unique to their needs. Third, the facilities and variety of equipment the university provides gives participants an opportunity to exercise for no cost and experience new activities. Findings from this study may lead to new ideas for adapted physical activity programs and provide PETE information to help better prepare future teachers who will work with individuals with a disability. For example exploring the different roles involved in an APA practicum will help understand how the program is contributing to the university, faculty, students, and the community.
This study emphasized that a university’s APA practicum impacts the lives of the pre-service teachers, physical activity participants, and teachers. Previous research on APA practica focussed on the views of pre-service teachers (i.e. Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2003; Perlman & Piletic, 2012; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995) and current teachers (i.e. Hardin, 2005; Hodge et al., 2009; Rizzo & Vispoel, 1991) in the field of physical education. However, there is a lack of research exploring the impact of an APA practicum from multiple perspectives. For example, a practicum program may be effectively preparing PETE students but not meeting the needs of the physical activity participants or vice versa. There is a need for PETE programs to prepare future teachers who are confident and competent to teach individuals with a disability. However, there is also a need to increase the opportunity for individuals with a disability to be physically active. The current study identified that learning occurs in an APA practicum for both the university student and the physical activity participants. Future research involving PDC could define goals and objectives for both the McGill students and physical activity participants. In addition, researchers could determine whether those goals and objectives are being met and confirm what the participants are learning, both physically and socially.

Findings of this study also indicated that communication was a valuable component of PDC. University programs that cater to different groups of individuals must have an effective communication system in place to assure all participants are gaining what they can from that particular program. Future research should explore the role communication plays within a university
practicum. There is a need to prepare future physical educators to teach students of all abilities. An infusion approach could help place the focus on abilities rather than differences. PETE programs should explore how the infusion approach within PETE programs impact pre-service teachers’ confidence and competence towards teaching individuals with a disability. Lastly, a formal evaluation of PDC is needed to determine how the program is impacting the participants, university, and community.

**Limitations**

There are three limitations to acknowledge in the present study. One obvious limitation is that the findings are unique to McGill University’s PDC program. However, leaders of similar APA practicum programs could explore certain findings they feel may relate to their particular program. Second, the participants were volunteers who met predetermined criteria, not a random sample. It may be assumed that those individuals who had a positive experience with PDC would volunteer to participate in the study. Therefore future studies should include a more diverse sample of program participants. Lastly, the participants were interviewed post PDC. If participants are interviewed during the ten week program their experiences would be easier to recall and possibly with more detail. However, in that case, participants may only discuss their most recent experience instead of reflecting on the program as a whole.
References


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Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study


Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study


Appendix A
Recruitment E-mail

Dear McGill Students/Teachers,

My name is Erica Rate and I am a graduate student in Adapted Physical Activity, under the supervision of Dr. Greg Reid, at McGill University. For the past two years I have been involved in the program Project Double Challenge (PDC). I am conducting a research project that focuses on PDC and how the program makes an impact.

I am asking for your participation in the study, to meet the requirements: (for McGill Students)

1. You must be majoring in Physical and Health Education
2. Have previously taken EDKP 396, Adapted Physical Activity, within two years, and
3. PDC was your first experience working with individuals with disabilities

I am asking for your participation in the study, to meet the requirements: (for REACH teachers)

1. Have at least 5 years of experience working with Project Double Challenge

If you meet these requirements, your participation will entail:

1. A one-on-one semi-structured interview about your experience with PDC. The interview will last about 45 minutes to an hour and be at a location convenient for you.
2. A follow up approximately 2 weeks after the interview to discuss and clarify your responses.

Please read the attached letter and consent form if you are interested in taking part. Form can be returned through e-mail or hard copy to Erica Rate or Greg Reid.

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me or my advisor, Dr. Greg Reid.

Erica Rate
Advisor
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Appendix B

Parental Permission

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Erica Rate and I am a graduate student in Adapted Physical Activity, under the supervision of Dr. Greg Reid, at McGill University. For the past two years I have been involved in the program Project Double Challenge. This program is a physical activity practicum program for McGill students registered in the course Adapted Physical Activity. The program is held on Wednesday mornings from 9am-12pm starting the end of January and finishing in early April. I am conducting a research project focusing on Project Double Challenge (PDC), more specifically the insight and lived experiences of the individuals involved in the program. I would like to request permission for your child to participate.

The study consists of:

1. A one-on-one semi-structured interview that will last approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The interview will be held at a location convenient for your child and will focus on their experience with PDC.
2. A follow-up about two weeks after the initial interview to clarify their responses.

The project will be explained in terms that your child understands and your child will participate only if they choose to volunteer. If your child decides to participate in the study they will be informed that they may choose not to answer any question they do not want to. Only my advisor, Dr. Greg Reid, and I will have access to the information from your child. Your child’s actual name will not be used in presentations or publications of the findings. Results will be submitted as a thesis manuscript to McGill University and may be published in a scholarly journal. At the conclusion of the study the data will be erased or returned to you, if requested.

Participation in this study is voluntary. There is no expected risk involved in participating in this study. If your permission is granted, your child will then be asked if they are interested in participating. Your decision of whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect the services provided to your child by McGill University and Project Double Challenge. Even if you grant permission for your child to participate, he or she is free to refuse and or end participation at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child’s rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Ethics Officer at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.
Looking inside Project Double Challenge: A case study

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions of concerns.

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Thank you,
Erica Rate

Please indicate whether or not you permit your child to participate in this project by checking one of the statements below, signing your name and returning the form to your child’s teacher. Please sign both copies and keep one for your records.

I grant permission for my child to participate in this research project.

I grant permission for my child to be audio-recorded.

Parent/Legal Tutor Signature
Parent/Legal Tutor Printed Name

Child’s Printed Name
Date
Appendix C

Informed Assent

Date

Dear Participant,

My name is Erica Rate and I am a graduate student in Adapted Physical Activity, under the supervision of Dr. Greg Reid, at McGill University. For the past two years I have been working with Project Double Challenge, which is the physical activity program at McGill University on Wednesday mornings.

I am conducting a research project focusing on Project Double Challenge (PDC). The goal of the research is to learn more about PDC. If you agree to be in this project you will be asked to take part in an interview about your experience with this program. The interview will be recorded, last approximately an hour, and will take place somewhere convenient for you. If you do not want to take part in this project you don’t have to. Remember, being in this project is your choice and if at any time you want to drop out of the study you may do so without any questions.

About two weeks after the interview you will be contacted by Erica to discuss and clarify your responses to the questions asked.

Your actual name will not be used in any presentation or publications of the results. The recordings of the interview will only be available to me and my advisor Greg Reid. You can ask questions about the project now, or at any time throughout the research.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Ethics Officer at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca

Please contact us with any questions of concerns.

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E-mail: greg.reid@mcgill.ca
I have read the above letter. I understand the purpose of the reach project and what will be asked of me.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions, which were answered, and I understand I may ask questions throughout the project.

I agree to be audio-recorded. [ ] YES  [ ] NO

I agree to the purpose and use of the audio-recording described above. [ ] YES  [ ] NO

I agree to participate in this research project and understand that my participation is voluntary. [ ] YES  [ ] NO

Participant Signature    Date

Researcher Signature    Date

Appendix D
Interview Guide

**McGill Student**

Introduce researcher & ask if they have any questions.

1. What year university were you in when you were enrolled in PDC?

2. Tell me about your experience in PDC.
   - What are the benefits of PDC?
     - for yourself?
     - that you perceive the students gain?

3. What are the drawbacks of PDC?
   - what would you change?
   - how would you change it?

4. Tell me about how you applied the material learned in class to the practicum?
   - what did you write about in your reflection?
   - was it helpful to keep a reflection journal?
   - did you feel prepared for PDC? Why or why not?

5. What did you find most challenging about PDC?
   - how did you deal with it?

6. Since your experience with PDC, have you worked with individuals with a disability?
   - if yes, in what setting?
   - did you feel PDC helped prepare you for this experience?

7. Do you feel that PDC changed your perceptions and views about working with individuals with a disability?
   - why or why not?

**Teachers**

Introduce researcher & ask if they have any questions.

1. How many years have you been working with PDC?

2. What are the benefits of PDC?
   - for your students
     - how do you see the benefits?
   - McGill students?

3. What are the drawbacks of PDC?
   - what would you change about PDC?

4. Tell me about any feedback you have received from parents?
5. What do your students discuss about PDC?

The Adolescent

Introduce researcher & ask if they have any questions.

1. How long have you been participating in the physical activity program on Wednesday at McGill?

2. Tell me about your experiences in the Wednesday program at McGill.
   -what do you like about the program?
     -give me some examples of things you like and why.
   -what do you dislike about the program?
     -give me some examples of things you dislike and why?

3. What is challenging about the physical activity program?
   -how do you deal with the challenges?

3. How was your experience working with your McGill partner?
Parent Questionnaire

Dear Parents/Legal Tutors:

My name is Erica Rate and I am a graduate student in Adapted Physical Activity, under the supervision of Dr. Greg Reid, at McGill University. For the past two years I have been involved in the program Project Double Challenge. This program is a physical activity practicum program for McGill students registered in the course Adapted Physical Activity. The program is held on Wednesday mornings from 9am-12pm starting the end of January and finishing in early April. Students from both REACH school and Summit TECC attend this Wednesday morning program.

I am conducting a research project focusing on Project Double Challenge (PDC). The goal of the research is to look more closely at PDC as a program and gain insight into participants’ experiences. I would appreciate your input into what you believe your child gains from participating in the program. If you choose to volunteer, simply respond to the questions on the following page and return them to your child’s teacher. To clarify, your response is anonymous and you are not obligated to provide answers if you do not wish. However, your responses will assist the researcher in capturing how PDC makes an impact and how to improve this experience for the students.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions of concerns.

Thank you,

Erica Rate

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Please answer the following questions, place the answers into the appropriate envelope provided, and return it to your child’s teacher. Thank you for your time.

Does your child talk to you about attending PDC? If yes, what aspects of the program do they tell you about?

What does your child gain from the program?
Appendix F
Informed Consent

Date

Dear Participant,

My name is Erica Rate and I am a graduate student in Adapted Physical Activity, under the supervision of Dr. Greg Reid, at McGill University. For the past two years I have been involved in the program Project Double Challenge. This program is a physical activity practicum program for McGill students registered in the course Adapted Physical Activity. The program is held on Wednesday mornings from 9am-12pm starting the end of January and finishing in early April.

I am conducting a research project focusing on Project Double Challenge (PDC). The goal of the research is to look more closely at PDC as a program and gain insight into individual’s experiences. If you choose to participate, you will be taking part in a one-on-one semi-structured interview focusing on your experience with PDC. The researcher will contact you to establish a date and time to meet at a location of your choice. The interview will be approximately an hour long and will be audio-recorded. Choosing to participate in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time without question.

After the interview you will be contacted approximately two weeks later to review, clarify, add or delete your responses.

Participant confidentiality will be respected at all times. You will be assigned a number, which will be used to protect your anonymity during the data analysis process. Your real name will not be used in any presentation or publication of the findings. All recordings and transcriptions of interviews will be stored in a password protected computer. Only I or my advisor Greg Reid will have access to this information to ensure confidentiality. The results will be submitted as a thesis manuscript to McGill University and may be published in a scholarly journal. Once the study is complete the data will be erased or return to you, if requested.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Ethics Officer at 514-398-6831 or lynda.meneil@mcgill.ca
I have read the above letter and consent form. I understand the purpose of the reach project and what will be asked of me.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions, which were answered to my satisfaction, and I understand I may ask questions throughout the project.

I agree to be audio-recorded.

I agree to the purpose and use of the audio-recording described above.

I agree to participate in this research project and understand that my participation is voluntary.

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher Signature

Date