

ARTICLE REVIEWED

The Experiences of Latina and Latino Blind and Visually Impaired Students in Physical Education: A Retrospective Study

Arroyo-Rojas, F., Martínez-Rivera, S., Ball, L. E., De Luna-Vázquez, W., & López-Morales, A. J. (2026) The experiences of Latina and Latino blind and visually impaired students in physical education: A retrospective study. *European Physical Education Review*, 32(3), 564-581.

THE PROBLEM

While adapted physical education research considering students' experiences is increasing, there has been a limited focus on individuals with disabilities from different ethnic and racial groups. Latino and Latina students who are blind and visually impaired are often placed in integrated physical education classes without receiving meaningful inclusion. Teachers' lack of knowledge and preparation around inclusion of children who are blind or visually impaired present barriers to providing high-quality physical education learning experiences for these students.



Research Summary

This U.S.-based study uses an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) design to retrospectively investigate the integrated K-12 physical education experiences of Latina and Latino adults who are blind or visually impaired. IPA seeks to understand participants' complex lived experiences and realities. The participants were interviewed and three themes were developed from the data: Teachers often lacked the knowledge to support students who are blind or visually impaired; peer relationships strongly influenced participants' sense of belonging; and self-advocacy and empowerment were important for participants' success in physical education. These themes suggest that placing students with disabilities in general physical education settings does not necessarily guarantee meaningful inclusion.

Conclusion

This study found that Latina/Latino adults who are blind and visually impaired recalled often experiencing exclusion as learners when they were placed in general physical education classes. Teachers' limited knowledge, visually dependent instruction, and lowered expectations restricted these students' participation, while opportunities to build peer relationships and enact self-advocacy improved the students' sense of belonging. Meaningful inclusion requires accessible instruction, direct communication with students, appropriate adaptations/modifications, and recognition of students as capable and valuable participants.

Key Takeaway

Placement is not the same as inclusion. This study highlights that learners with disabilities may feel excluded, isolated, and/or undervalued in general physical education settings. Teachers' limited knowledge of how to support students with disabilities can result in these students being excluded from activities, sidelined, or given easier but less meaningful learning tasks. Teachers need stronger preparation in accessible instruction, appropriate adaptations/modifications, and direct communication to help ensure all students experience optimum success in physical education.