



State of Play: Seattle-King County

In conjunction with the Aspen Institute, the University of Washington and King County Parks are engaged in research to produce a landscape analysis of barriers to and opportunities for youth sport, physical activity, and outdoor recreation in King County. The report is informed by Aspen's Project Play initiative, which aims to transform the landscape of youth sports so that more youth are physically active. The research will result in a report, to be released in September 2019, called State of Play: Seattle-King County.

Part of the research is gathering information through surveys, interviews and focus groups. Youth with physical disabilities, and their parents, participated in focus groups to talk about their experiences with physical activity and physical education. Here are some of their responses:

“In PE they try to let me participate but usually I'm just playing tag and I get tagged first so then I have to sit out. They've tried to let her dribble a ball but the challenge we experience the most being a full-time wheelchair user is people are very hesitant to let her participate in programs because they're afraid that other children are going to be hurt, and so it's – and I understand that. But to completely take the opportunity away from my child to even try to participate in something because you're afraid, that's the challenge we experienced. So when it comes to her being physically active, we – this program is great because she does get, you know, the opportunity to be active, to have that exercise. “

“He doesn't do – he wasn't in PE and regular other sports, able-bodied sports up until now, and now this is it for him, and it's like it's basically it. It's everything. So and there aren't – there aren't other ways – no one told us about this program. No one tells us about any other program. Every single thing that we've got in to do, we have to seek out.... So definitely don't feel like there is nearly enough visibility with this and people at our school are absolutely no help”

“So she's developing this concept in her own head because other people and able-bodied sports that are specifically designed for able-bodied people. It's hard for them to understand that while maybe she gets around a little bit differently, there are ways she can participate and that's a huge challenge that we experience because now her mindset is well, I can't do that. “

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These above quotes provided to me show that we need to provide more training and supports for our students and families with disabilities. A major way we can have an impact is to better prepare our professionals through an Adapted Physical Education endorsement and trainings. Toni Bader – albader@seattleschools.org