

The playground is a school environment in which children participate in play, which is an occupation that is linked to healthy physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development (Bundy et al., 2008). It is also the environment in which recess takes place. Recess is defined as a designated period of time during the elementary school day for children to engage in unstructured physical activity and play (American Academy of Pediatrics [AAP], 2013; “Recess,” 2018). As a result of meaningful play during recess, children are able to concentrate better in the classroom, learn valuable communication and coping skills, and increase their overall physical well-being (AAP, 2013). Although recess is a pivotal part of every child’s development, children with disabilities are more likely to be excluded or victimized by peers in the recess environment, which impacts their development (McNamara, Lakman, Spadafora, Lodewyk, & Walker, 2018; Milter, Ginsburg, & Mulligan, 2012). Students with disabilities have higher levels of school-based exclusion, isolation, bullying, anxiety, and depression when compared with typically developing peers (McNamara et al., 2018). Children with physical disabilities also have a difficult time accessing the playground because of environmental barriers, making it difficult for them to keep up with their peers (Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009). Research has found that recess is an opportune time to implement modified cooperative games, as to develop group cohesion and create a sense of belonging amongst children (Street, Hoppe, Kingsbury, & Ma, 2004). It is important to develop relationships between children with disabilities and their typically developing peers, however, environmental modifications also need to be made to ensure continual participation amongst all children (Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009).

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