

The use of Normative Motor Assessments in CWVI – an ableism-critical perspective

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Type of Contribution:

Age Range Pre-School, Elementary, Middle School, High School

Population Visual Impairment, Deafblindness, Additional Disabilities/Severe

Physical Activity Visual Impairment, Deafblindness, Additional Disabilities/Severe

Session Activity Research Presentation (20 minutes)

Normative motor skill assessments occupy a privileged position in physical education scholarship and practice. So much so, in fact, they manifest as common-sense cultural arrangements in most movement contexts, including adapted physical education and in particular in movement research in the context of visual impairment and blindness. In this line, the Test for Gross Motor Development (TGMD), which is currently its third iteration, is considered the ‘gold-standard’ for normative motor skill assessments and is the most used criterion- and norm-based FMS assessment internationally within research in visually impaired and blind children.

The proliferation of such tools has generally been uncontested. In this presentation, we argue that normative motor skill assessments have ableist underpinnings and consequently may do more to subordinate than empower visually impaired and blind children. More specifically, we suggest that normative motor assessment tools and criteria, perhaps unintentionally, highlight what is perceived to be wrong, bad, and faulty about the ways disabled bodies look and move, thus reinforcing ableist norms and values relating to ability. In our oral presentation we end by encouraging scholars and practitioners to critically reflect on ableist notions of ability, particularly as they relate to movement competence, and to work with visual impaired and blind children because of their embodied experiences to co-design assessments that are more meaningful to visual impaired and blind children.