

I was an undergraduate assistant on the Special Olympics project for two sites, Maine and Louisiana. Both of which consisted of a structured 8-week curriculum complemented by continuous staff and University of Houston personnel support. The curriculum, which was created by hand from scratch, was very well paced and structured. It covered everything from the mental attitudes regarding food and motivation to practical application skills like portion sizing and label reading. The in-person visits and activity tracking also provide valuable quantitative data to help grow the worryingly small amount of literature about the population and physical activity. Well-roundedness is an important part of any behavioral intervention, and I feel this program achieves this well.

From a personal standpoint, the project definitely served to educate me on individuals with IDD and change some of my misconceptions about those individuals. I feel that before the intervention and the opportunity to be a part of it, I had a general understanding of IDD individuals that definitely sold them short of the amount of depth they contain.

I've had the opportunity to see them grow, respond, and demonstrate pride in their achievements. All of which can be attributed to the participant's work ethic and the extra level of genuine care that much of the staff so obviously hold for these individuals. As an Exercise Science major and nutrition minor student, I feel strongly that I gained a lot of experience from being a part of this project that I previously wouldn't have even thought about seeking out. At the end of the day, there is no doubt in my mind that this curriculum holds much value not only for the participants but also for those who want to diversify their research and intervention experience in the IDD population and public health.