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## Inclusion in summer camps: Attitudes and perceptions of camp stakeholders

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This study is the result of a collaborative project with the YMCAs of Québec (Canada), whose tool “Maximize Participation of all Campers” (MPC) aims to support camp staff in implementing inclusive practices. The objectives were to examine the evolution of their camp staff's attitudes towards inclusion and to compare their perceptions regarding the implementation of the strategies suggested in the MPC tool subsequent to its use. Data were collected from 32 participants (companions = 17; counsellors = 15) who completed two questionnaires (June and August 2021). Companions' and counsellors' attitudes were positive despite a small significant decrease in companions' attitudes regarding outcomes of inclusion, and both camp stakeholders reported positive perceptions.

In conclusion, to support the inclusion of children in summer camps, it is important to nurture the camp staff's positive attitudes towards inclusion. Accordingly, the MPC tool appears effective, as the staff reported positive perceptions regarding its use.

**Keywords:** interest; enjoyment; perceived competence; perceived choice; tension; pressure; camp staff; inclusion

Cette étude est le résultat d'un projet collaboratif avec les YMCA du Québec (Canada), dont l'outil « Maximiser la participation de tous les campeurs » (MPC) vise à soutenir le personnel de camps dans la mise en œuvre de pratiques inclusives. Les objectifs étaient d'examiner l'évolution des attitudes du personnel envers l'inclusion et de comparer leurs perceptions quant à la mise en œuvre des stratégies de l'outil MPC. Les données ont été recueillies auprès de 32 participants (accompagnateurs = 17; animateurs = 15) qui ont rempli deux questionnaires (juin et août 2021). Les attitudes des accompagnateurs et des animateurs à l'égard de l'inclusion étaient positives, malgré une légère diminution significative des attitudes des accompagnateurs quant aux retombées de l'inclusion, et leurs perceptions étaient positives.

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En conclusion, pour favoriser l'inclusion des enfants en camps, il importe d'encourager les attitudes positives du personnel de camp à l'égard de l'inclusion. À cet effet, l'outil MPC semble efficace, puisque le personnel entretenait des perceptions positives quant à son utilisation.

**Mots clés:** intérêt; plaisir; compétence perçue; choix perçu; tension; pression; personnel du camp; inclusion

## Introduction

Summer camps in Quebec (Canada) are becoming an increasingly large part of municipalities' budgets (Carbonneau *et al.*, 2018). Indeed, summer camp is known to provide young people with experiences beneficial to the development of social skills, self-esteem, leadership, connection to nature and environment, and physical activity skills (Botting *et al.*, 2021; Girard *et al.*, 2022; Wilson et Sibthorp, 2018). However, there are insufficient resources to include everyone in summer camps, especially children requiring special attention from the staff, and the result is the exclusion of some children with special needs (e.g., autism spectrum disorder; Pronovost, 2020). The main reasons for these rejections have to do with the safety of participants and staff members, camp stakeholders' lack of training and experience, lack of funds for hiring qualified camp staff and lack of accessible or adequate settings to meet the needs of these particular children (Thibault-Marleau *et al.*, 2020).

## Inclusion in camps

Social inclusion is known to be a major goal for camp professionals and parents in promoting an opportunity for every camper to play and excel in multiple activities (Shefter *et al.*, 2017). In fact, one of the most important factors affecting parents' decision to send their child to camp is the quality of staff recruitment, staff training, and staff management of the camp (McCole *et al.*, 2019). Specifically, inclusion represent "a way to enable people with disabilities to fully participate in society" (Carbonneau *et al.*, 2021, p. 138), which can take on a variety of forms in leisure settings. Although there are a variety of definitions of social inclusion, it generally involves community participation and a sense of belonging (Cobigo *et al.*, 2012; Hall, 2009; Simplican *et al.*, 2015). Indeed, Carbonneau *et al.* (2015) propose five different possibilities for inclusive leisure experience: adapted leisure in specialized areas, adapted community leisure, accompanied leisure, leisure with support for facilitators, and inclusive leisure with complete freedom. It should be noted that the *Rights of handicapped persons Act* 2004 (Qc) requires municipalities with a population of over 15000 to draw up an annual action plan to enable the integration of disabled people into the workplace and society. Municipal services include leisure, sports and cultural activities, such as summer camps.

Although children with special needs represent a minority in summer camps, there is a growing interest in the importance and necessity of including them (Girard *et al.*, 2022). As mentioned above, summer camps offer benefits to children, and even more so to children with special needs, insofar as they help reduce feelings of isolation, among other things (Clark & Nwokah, 2010). Furthermore, inclusion efforts have very likely attracted the interest of research on inclusive camp settings, because the effectiveness of such efforts points to multiple positive outcomes (physical, emotional, and social) among those with disabilities (Shefter *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, this inclusion process is often the responsibility of the camp staff, whose main role is to support,

motivate and animate the groups in their care (Beauchemin *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, part of including these children involves responding adequately to their special needs in the face of multiple challenges. The staff's specific role can be presented on a continuum (see Figure 1), ranging from charge of a group of children with and without disabilities to charge of one specific child with disabilities (Carbonneau *et al.*, 2018).

### Conceptual framework

As shown in the high quality inclusive (Carbonneau *et al.*, 2018) and empowering (Girard, Desbiens *et al.*, 2023) leisure experience framework (see Figure 2; Girard, Paquet *et al.*, 2023), the duties of camp staff members such as companions are to supervise and animate children and manage their multiple needs with a view to facilitating the inclusion process (Duquette *et al.*, 2021). This framework is based on two motivational theories well recognized in several contexts (e.g., academic, physical education, sport, leisure): self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and achievement goal (Ames, 1992) theories. The importance of satisfying individuals' basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) is at the core of this framework. On one side, the inclusive framework indicates that it is the companion's responsibility to ensure that the accompanied child's needs are satisfied (Carbonneau *et al.*, 2018). On the other side, the empowering leisure experience specifies how to meet these needs according to 15 empowering motivational strategies (Girard, Desbiens *et al.*, 2023).

Among other variables, attitudes and perceptions are key determinants of behavior (Ajzen et Driver, 1992). In this sense, positive attitudes and perceptions toward these strategies could increase the likelihood of camp staff using them. Specifically, individuals decide to adopt particular strategies based on their attitudes toward

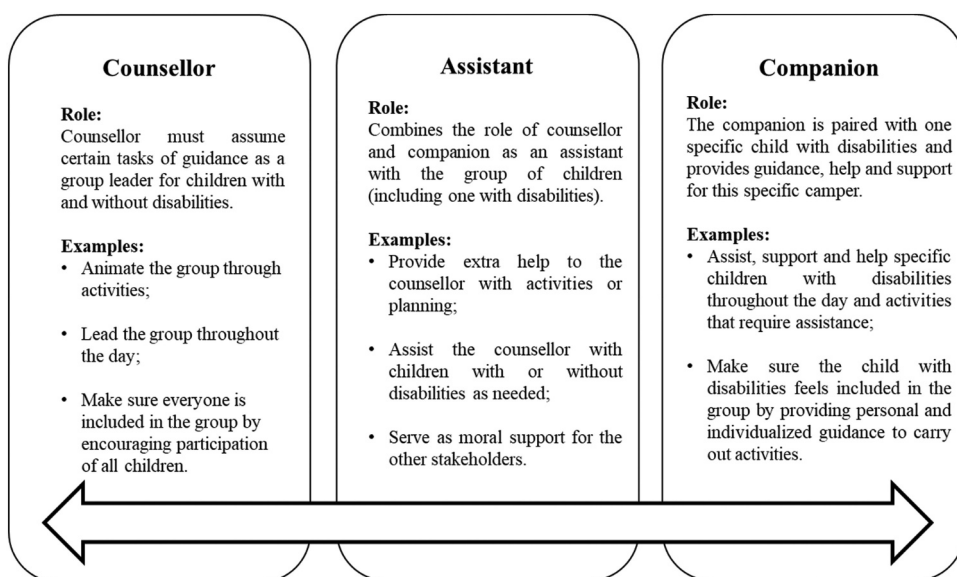


Figure 1. Continuum of roles and responsibilities for camp counselors and companions (based on Carbonneau *et al.*, 2018).

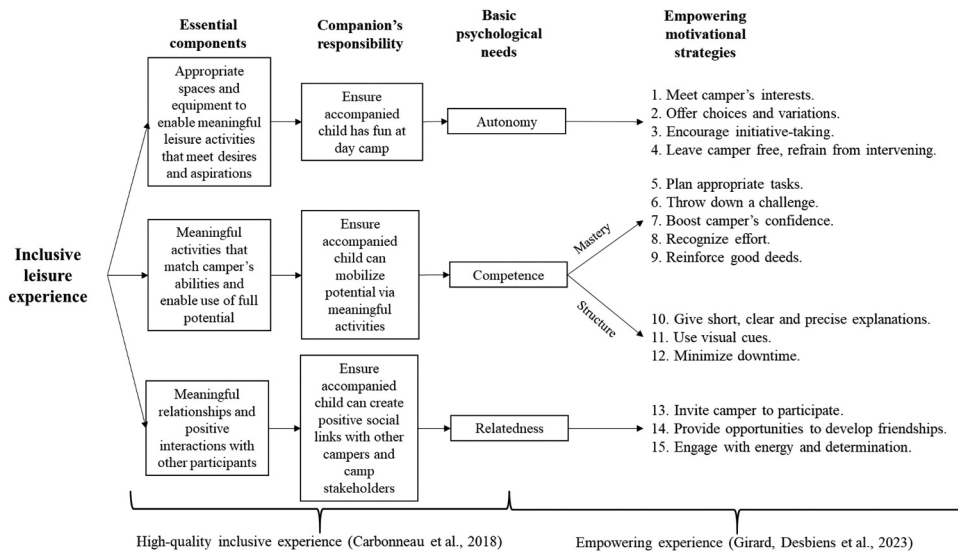


Figure 2. High-quality inclusive and empowering leisure experience framework (Girard, Paquet *et al.*, 2023).

them, notably by evaluating the desirability and consequences of an action, considering others' validation of the action and evaluating their capacity to perform it successfully (Alexandris et Stodolska, 2004). Indeed, according to the theory of planned behavior, the more favorable an individual's attitude toward a behavior, the more likely they are to adopt it (Ajzen et Driver, 1992). As regards attitudes toward inclusion, Folsom-Reek and Rizzo (2002) examine the results of including children with disabilities in regular groups and the anticipated effects on children with or without disabilities. In summer camp settings, counselors who anticipate differences and make plans to promote a sense of belonging to the group tend to adopt favorable attitudes toward inclusion (Shefter *et al.*, 2017), which, in turn, generates beneficial outcomes for children with disabilities. Accordingly, camp staff members who consider inclusion meaningful may be more engaged in their work, have greater job satisfaction, and be more committed to using the recommended strategies, thereby increasing inclusion in the camp (Warner *et al.*, 2021).

In line with attitudes, camp stakeholders' positive perceptions (e.g., interest and enjoyment, perceived competence and perceived choice) are conducive to the use of recommended strategies (Wahl-Alexander *et al.*, 2017), whereas negative perceptions (e.g., pressure and tension) may discourage their use. For example, stakeholders who perceive they are making a difference are likelier to employ strategies that favor inclusion. Similarly, it is suggested that companions or counselors who demonstrate a high level of perceived competence perform their duties more effectively, resulting in a better experience for campers (Wahl-Alexander *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, according to self-determination theory (Ryan et Deci, 2000), interest and enjoyment toward a task, a perception of high competence and a sense of perceived control or choice are related to self-determined forms of motivation. In other words, there is a greater probability of engaging in favorable behaviors (Ryan et Deci, 2000). On the other hand, a decrease in perceived control on the part of counselors often comes from a misunderstanding of their

role (Schaumleffel et Backlund, 2009). Such a misunderstanding could result in a less inclusive summer camp setting because camp staff members would view their role in the inclusion process as less important.

Most camp stakeholders believe their duties are to keep campers safe, help them have fun and accompany them during recreation (Schaumleffel et Backlund, 2009). Additionally, one of the first factors influencing the actions of camp staff is their own perception of their role regarding those in their charge. This perception, which is also tied to the training offered to fulfil this role, will affect how they behave with their group (Carbonneau *et al.*, 2018). In other words, staff members' perception of their role as counselors or companions will tend to affect how inclusion plays out in the camp setting. Furthermore, research indicates that, instead of information based on diagnostic criteria alone, staff members such as counselors or companions would appreciate receiving additional information and suggestions for tailoring activities to allow for the inclusion of children with special needs (Shefter *et al.*, 2017).

### ***A tool to help camp staff foster inclusion***

In order to better support their camp staff in the inclusion of children, the YMCAs of Québec (Canada) developed a tool called “Maximize Participation of all Campers [MPC]” and offered specific training to companions and counselors during an intensive session prior to the start of camp. The MPC tool was initially designed in 2018 by the YMCA's physical literacy consultant and diversity and social inclusion advisor with the collaboration of the principal investigator, but was temporarily set aside owing to the pandemic. As presented in Figure 3, the tool comprises four steps that serve as an analysis framework for camp staff to examine the situation and choose the appropriate strategies to be implemented according to the child, the context and the activity. During precamp training, specific training on how to use the MPC tool as well as other courses related to each step of the tool was offered to camp staff. For example, training relative to step 4, referred to as the “bag of tricks,” was focused on empowering motivational strategies and behavior management.

### **Study context**

In 2020, YMCA Québec asked the research team to conduct a project specifically aimed at assessing the evolution of camp stakeholders' attitudes toward inclusion during use of the MPC tool in summer. Additionally, although the tool was mainly developed to help companions implement inclusion, it was also intended for use by counselors. The researchers therefore considered it important to compare the perceptions of counselors and companions in this regard to highlight differences between these roles.

Because YMCA Québec requested a research project aimed at meeting a specific need, namely, to support their camp staff in the sustainable implementation of the MPC tool in a day camp setting, the research team applied for a Partnership Engagement Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Council (SSHRC 892–20210064).

### **Objectives**

Given that the attitudes and perceptions of camp stakeholders predict future behaviors (Ajzen et Driver, 1992), such as using the strategies recommended in the high quality

Maximize Participation of all Campers			
Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Identification of the camper's <b>interests, needs and skills</b> .	Identification of <b>types of participation</b> that match the camper's <b>needs and skills</b> (e.g., proximity, parallel play, turn-taking, simple rules, modified rules [individual/group], sharing, social interaction).	Identification of <b>barriers</b> to participation and <b>possible solutions</b> (e.g., location, attitudes, materials, activities/ guidelines).	Identification of <b>motivational strategies</b> (see list in Figure 1) that support camper's motivation and engagement.

Figure 3. Steps of the MPC tool.

inclusive and empowering leisure experience framework (see [Figure 2](#); Girard, Paquet et al., 2023), this study focuses on two specific objectives, namely:

- (1) To examine the evolution of companions' and counsellors' attitudes toward inclusion of campers (outcomes of inclusion and effect on campers) between the start and end of summer camp; and
- (2) To compare the perceptions (interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, perceived choice, pressure/tension) of companions and counselors regarding the implementation of the strategies suggested in the MPC tool at summer's end.

Considering the inclusive values of the YMCA, it is expected that camp staff will display positive attitudes toward inclusion of campers, and that using the MPC tool might help increase these positive attitudes during summer camp. In addition, because of the role entrusted to companions in the inclusion of children with special needs, it is expected that they might have more positive perceptions toward the implementation of the strategies of the MPC tool than counselors.

Method

Procedure

The project obtained the ethical approval of the institution (CER-21-278-07.31) and was presented to camp stakeholders during the intensive training session in June 2021 prior to the start of camp. Companions and counselors were then invited, on a voluntary basis, to complete the bilingual online questionnaire during a staff meeting via email. They were also given the option to complete the questionnaire another time, at their convenience. Two reminders were sent out during the first weeks of camp. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to leave their email address if they were interested in completing the second questionnaire at the end of summer. An email and two reminders were sent to them in late August.



### Participants

The initial sample consisted of 78 participants (companions = 43; counselors = 35). Only participants who responded to both questionnaires concerning the variables analyzed were retained. The final sample therefore consists of 32 participants: 17 companions ( $M = 1$ ;  $W = 15$ ; nonbinary/intersex = 1) and 15 counselors ( $M = 4$ ;  $W = 11$ ). The number of participants also varies based on the variables analyzed, since not all participants responded to all questions. Indeed, only counselors and companions who were faced with situations requiring to use inclusion strategies during summer camp responded to the questionnaire at Time 2. The average age of companions and counselors is 32.16 years ( $SD = 4.44$ ) and 32.07 years ( $SD = 6.13$ ) respectively. The number of years of experience in their current role is 1.67 years ( $SD = 2.23$ ) for companions and less than one year ( $M = 0.73$ ;  $SD = 1.01$ ) for counselors. Detailed sociodemographic characteristics of participants are presented in Table 1.

### Measures

To meet the two research objectives, a quantitative approach was used. Specifically, questionnaires allow us to reach a high number of participants and to collect data that can be statistically compared. Moreover, because the study took place the summer following the pandemic, remote access to camp staff was difficult. After discussing with the partner (YMCA), questionnaires appear to be the most secure and efficient way to reach participants. Therefore, two online bilingual questionnaires were used to measure participants' attitudes toward inclusion at the start (T1) and end (T2) of summer camp as well as their perceptions regarding the implementation of the strategies in the MPC tool during summer (T2). The original scales all displayed acceptable internal consistency ( $\alpha \geq .68$ ; Folsom-Reek et Rizzo, 2002; McAuley et al., 1989). In the following subsections, the Cronbach alphas presented were calculated with our collected data.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of participants ( $n = 32$ ).

Characteristics	Companions		Counselors	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Would you associate yourself with any of the following				
Disability	0	0	2	13.3
Different needs and diverse	1	5.9	0	0
Neurodiverse	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to answer	1	5.9	1	6.7
No	15	88.2	12	80
Other	0	0	0	0
Main language spoken at home				
English	11	64.7	7	46.7
French	2	11.8	4	26.7
Other	4	23.5	4	26.7
Current or completed school level education				
High School	2	11.8	2	13.3
Vocational studies	0	0	0	0
College studies	11	64.7	7	46.7
University studies	4	23.5	6	40.0
I prefer not to answer	0	0	0	0

Note. <sup>a</sup>The total percentages for this variable among companions is 100.1% due to rounding.



### Attitudes

The attitudes of camp stakeholders' (companions and counselors) toward inclusion of children with disabilities were measured for the camp context using an adapted version of *Physical Educators' Attitude Toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities III* (PEATID III; Folsom-Reek et Rizzo, 2002). Specifically, we selected two of the three subscales (1- outcomes of including children with disabilities, 2- effects of inclusion, and 3- need for more preparation). First, six items measured the outcomes of including children with disabilities in summer camps ( $\alpha = .80$ ; e.g., *Children with different needs should be in the same day camp groups as other campers whenever possible.*; see Appendix A for a list of all items). Next, four items measured the effects of inclusion on campers ( $\alpha = .67$ ; e.g., *One of the benefits of including children with different needs in day camps is that all children will learn to work together toward achieving goals*). Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *totally disagree* (1) to *totally agree* (5).

### Perceptions

Camp stakeholders' (companions and counselors) perceptions of the use of the MPC tool were measured using the *Task evaluation questionnaire of the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory* (McAuley et al., 1989). Breaking it down, the scale to measure interest/enjoyment included seven items ( $\alpha = .91$ ; e.g., *I enjoyed using the strategies of the tool*); the scale for perceived competence five items ( $\alpha = .85$ ; e.g., *I think I'm pretty good at using the tool strategies*); the scale for perceived choice four items<sup>1</sup> ( $\alpha = .61$ ; e.g., *I felt that it was my choice to use the strategies of the tool.*); and the scale for pressure/tension four items<sup>2</sup> ( $\alpha = .64$ ; e.g., *I felt tense while using the strategies from the tool*). Participants responded on a 7point Likert scale ranging from *totally disagree* (1) to *totally agree* (7).

### Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 26 software. Given the small size of the sample and the nonnormality of the data, we performed nonparametric analyses (Pett, 2016) to achieve the two objectives. Specifically, nonparametric analyses with related samples (Wilcoxon signed-rank test) were performed to measure the evolution of companions' and counselors' attitudes toward inclusion of campers between the start and end of the camp (objective 1). Nonparametric analyses with independent samples (Mann-Whitney U test) were performed to compare the perceptions (interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, perceived choice, pressure/tension) of companions and counselors regarding the implementation of the strategies suggested in the MPC tool at the end of summer (objective 2).

### Results

In line with the first objective, Table 2 presents the results for companions and counselors. In terms of companions' attitudes, only one significant difference was observed between the beginning and end of summer. Indeed, at summer's end, companions had less favorable attitudes toward the outcomes associated with including children with disabilities in camp activities ( $z = -2.21$ ;  $p = .027$ ). Moreover, the mean score obtained at Time 1 was the only one above 4 on a 5-point scale. The

attitude related to anticipated outcomes is also the variable (T1 and T2) with the least variability.

In terms of counselors' attitudes, no significant differences were observed between the start and end of summer. Their experience during this time does not appear to have influenced their attitudes. On the other hand, the mean score for the variable effects on campers obtained at Time 2 is the only one above 4. Unlike companions, the attitudes of counselors related to the outcomes associated with including children with disabilities in a group of children without difficulties (T1 and T2) is the variable having the most variability.

Regarding the second objective, results show no significant differences in mean scores between companions and counselors at the end of summer (see Table 3). Furthermore, the data show that for both companions and counselors, the majority of average scores are above 5.20 out of a maximum of 7, indicating a high interest/enjoyment, perceived competence and perceived choice regarding the use of the strategies suggested in the MPC tool. The mean scores on the scale related to pressure/tension were the lowest (below 3.29) with the highest variability for both camp stakeholders, while scores for all other variables are over 5.20. Both companions and counselors seemed to have perceived little pressure/tension to implement the suggested strategies.

## Discussion

This study was conducted in partnership with YMCA Québec, who wished to evaluate the attitudes and perceptions of their camp staff after using the MPC tool during summer camp. Specifically, the aims were to examine the evolution of companions' and counselors' attitudes toward inclusion of campers and to compare their perceptions regarding the implementation of the strategies suggested in the MPC tool at the end of summer.

Overall, companions' and counselors' attitudes toward inclusion of campers (outcomes of inclusion and effect on campers) at the start and end of summer camp were positive. These results are quite encouraging considering that favorable attitudes toward a behavior lead to greater adoption of the behavior (Ajzen et Driver, 1992), increased engagement, greater job satisfaction, and a greater commitment to using the MPC tool

Table 2. Evolution of companions' ( $n = 11$ ) and counsellors' ( $n = 12$ ) attitudes toward inclusion of campers with different needs.

Attitudes	T1			T2			$z$	$p$
	$M$	$Mdn$	$SD$	$M$	$Mdn$	$SD$		
Companions								
Outcomes	4.06	4.00	0.45	3.77	3.83	0.48	-2.21	.027
Effect on campers	3.73	3.75	0.58	3.61	3.50	0.61	-0.48	.633
Counselors								
Outcomes	3.50	3.67	1.02	3.64	4.00	0.97	-0.05	.964
Effect on campers	3.94	4.00	0.81	4.06	4.00	0.65	-0.77	.441

Note. Minimum = 1; maximum = 5.

Table 3. Comparison of companions' and counsellors' perceptions about the implementation of strategies suggested in the MPC tool at the end of summer.

Perceptions	Companions				Counselors				<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Interest/enjoyment	16	5.71	5.57	1.04	13	5.35	5.86	0.96	-1.16	.244
Perceived competence	16	5.61	5.00	1.04	13	5.20	5.90	0.93	-1.34	.180
Perceived choice	15	5.44	5.75	1.04	13	5.33	5.50	1.08	-0.26	.799
Pressure/tension	16	3.29	3.13	1.34	13	3.00	3.25	1.33	-0.29	.774

Note. 1 = totally disagree; 7 = totally agree.

(Warner *et al.*, 2021). The significant decrease in companions' attitudes regarding the outcomes of inclusion may be because these attitudes were quite positive (4.06 out of 5) at the start of summer camp. In view of their roles and responsibilities (see Figure 1), it comes as no surprise that companions did not expect inclusion to be an "unfair burden," create additional work or require too much of their time. Indeed, anticipating differences and planning strategies to foster inclusion help maintain positive attitudes toward inclusion (Shefter *et al.*, 2017). In contrast, the score for this variable was the lowest for counselors (3.50 out of 5) at the start of summer, which could be explained by a difference in their perceptions of their roles regarding the charge of children with and without disabilities (responsible for a group rather than one-on-one). Indeed, this perception of their role is a crucial element in determining their actions (Carbonneau *et al.*, 2018).

As for perceptions of the implementation of the strategies suggested in the MPC tool at the end of summer, both camp stakeholders reported positive perceptions, with no significant differences. In other words, companions and counselors stated they experienced interest and enjoyment, felt competent and could choose whether or not to use the MPC tool during summer. Likewise, they both reported feeling little pressure or tension while implementing the strategies in the tool. Results regarding both objectives are consistent with previous literature revealing that lack of interest is negatively associated with attitudes (Alexandris et Stodolska, 2004), and a high perception of competence is associated with positive attitudes toward inclusion (Wahl-Alexander *et al.*, 2017).

When camp stakeholders perceive themselves as highly competent, they tend to better fulfil their responsibilities and, in consequence, offer campers a better experience (Wahl-Alexander *et al.*, 2017). The fact the YMCA's camp staff reported feeling very well able to use the MPC tool at the end of summer is encouraging, since previous studies show that, prior to staff training, counselors with or without prior camp experience demonstrate a low level of competence (Wahl-Alexander *et al.*, 2017) and confidence in their abilities (Baldwin *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, a high proportion of investment in training is often wasted because the information acquired is not transferred to practice (Broad et Newstrom, 1992; Foxon, 1993; Schaumleffel et Backlund, 2009; Wick et Granger, 2004). Considering that an unfavorable perception regarding manager support and low motivation are barriers to the transfer of training (Foxon, 1993; Schaumleffel et Backlund, 2009), it is interesting to note that both companions and counselors perceived they had a choice and felt under no pressure to use the MPC tool. Indeed, as indicated in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), all

these positive perceptions in terms of interest/enjoyment, competence and control nurture stakeholders' self-determined motivation to use strategies in the MPC tool according to their own will. Accordingly, we believe that both companions and counselors will be inclined to use the MPC tool again in the future.

In summary, the results of the present study indicate that the YMCA's companions and counselors are likely to implement the strategies of the MPC tool, which is promising for the reinvestment of this tool in the years to come.

For a summer camp to find success, the leadership team needs to induct camp staff successfully into the camp's beliefs and objectives. This induction period begins during orientation when staff are trained on specific policies, practices, and skills necessary to be successful as a camp counselor. (Wahl-Alexander *et al.*, 2017, p. 299)

The MPC tool thus represents an excellent avenue for supporting the transfer to practice of strategies taught during training and for promoting inclusion as the core value of the organization (YMCA du Québec, 2022). This tool also helps meet the needs identified by camp staff in previous research on how to foster the inclusion of all campers based on their specific needs instead of on a diagnosis alone (Schleien *et al.*, 2015; Shefter *et al.*, 2017).

### Limitations and conclusion

The present study has its limitations. The sample was small and specific to one organization, which differs from other types of camps, notably in terms of its structure, values and approach. The partnership nature of the study also makes it one of a kind. In particular, the responses of some of the staff may reflect social desirability bias (Grimm, 2010) since it was their employer who approached them to take part in the research project. For these reasons, it is difficult to generalize the results to other camp staff members. The study nevertheless offers interesting insight concerning an accessible tool that could help foster the inclusion of campers and may inspire managers seeking to support their camp staff in other types of camps.

In conclusion, summer camps are a valuable source of experiences for enhancing social skills, self-esteem, leadership, connection to nature and environment, and physical activity skills for all children, and this is even more so for children with disabilities living in isolation (Botting *et al.*, 2021; Clark et Nwokah, 2010; Girard *et al.*, 2022; Wilson et Sibthorp, 2018). Although including such children in camp represents multiple challenges (e.g., camp staff, funding, training, security, etc.), there is a growing interest in establishing inclusive settings in summer camps (Shefter *et al.*, 2017; Thibault-Marleau et al., 2020). Considering that this inclusion process often depends on the attitudes and perceptions of camp staff toward the importance of including children with disabilities in the camp (Beauchemin *et al.*, 2021), the results of the present study are useful insofar as they demonstrate how a specific tool can support camp staff in this regard.

### Notes

1. One item was removed (*I felt like I had to use the strategies from the tool*) to reach better internal consistency with our data.
2. One item was removed (*I felt relaxed while using the strategies from the tool*) to reach better internal consistency with our data.

## Disclosure statement

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## Appendix A. Items used to measure camp staff attitudes and perceptions

### Attitudes

Adapted from the *Physical Educators' Attitude Toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities III* (PEATID III; Folsom-Meek et Rizzo, 2002)

#### *Outcomes of including children with disabilities*

1. Children with different needs should be in the same day camp groups as other campers whenever possible.
2. Including children with different needs in day camp with other campers means more work for me. (R)
3. Children with different needs will disrupt the harmony of other campers at the day camp. (R)
4. Children with different needs will be excluded by their peers in the day camp. (R)
5. Including children with different needs in day camp with other campers places an unfair burden to work at camp. (R)
6. Children with different needs should not be in the same day camp groups as other campers because they will require too much of my time. (R)

#### *Effects of inclusion*

1. Children with different needs will learn more rapidly if they are in the same day camp groups as other campers.
2. One of the benefits of including children with different needs in day camps is that all children (with or without different needs) will learn to work together toward achieving goals.
3. Including children with different needs in day camps will motivate other campers to participate in the offered activities.
4. Children with different needs will develop a more favorable self-concept if they grow up in the same groups as other campers in day camp.

### Perceptions

Adapted from the *Task evaluation questionnaire of the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory* (McAuley et al., 1989)

#### *Interest/enjoyment*

1. I enjoyed using the strategies from the participant assessment tool.
2. Using the strategies of the participant assessment tool was very interesting.
3. Using the strategies in the participant assessment tool was fun.
4. I enjoyed using the strategies in the participant assessment tool.
5. I found the use of participant assessment tool strategies very boring. (R)
6. I think the use of the strategies from the participant assessment tool was very interesting.
7. I would describe the use of the participant assessment tool strategies as very enjoyable.

#### *Perceived competence*

1. I think I'm pretty good at using participant assessment tool strategies.
2. I think I did pretty well using the strategies of the participant assessment tool, compared to other camp staff.
3. I felt pretty skilled using the strategies of the participant assessment tool.
4. I am satisfied with my performance in my use of the strategies of the participant assessment tool.
5. After using the strategies of the participant assessment tool for a while, I feel pretty competent.

#### *Perceived choice*

1. I felt it was my choice to use the strategies of the participant assessment tool.
2. I felt free to use the strategies in the participant assessment tool.
3. I used the strategies from the participant assessment tool because I had no choice. (R)
4. I didn't really have a choice to use the strategies in the participant assessment tool. (R)

#### *Pressure/tension*

1. I was anxious using the strategies of the participant assessment tool.
2. I did not feel nervous at all about using the strategies in the participant assessment tool. (R)
3. I felt pressured while using the strategies in the participant assessment tool.
4. I felt tense using the strategies in the participant assessment tool.

Note. R = reversed