

Northeast Arc Journeys Day Program

Engagement and Social Interaction in Daily Program Activities

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INTRODUCTION

Northeast Arc is an organization that supports people with developmental disabilities. It was founded in 1954 by parents who wanted their children to be included in their communities and have the same opportunities as everyone else. Today, Northeast Arc helps individuals become more independent and build important life skills. The Journeys program gives people opportunities to volunteer, work, and be active members of their community.

INTERNSHIP PROJECT OBJECTIVE

- To identify which activities lead to the highest levels of client engagement and peer interaction
- To determine which activities clients participate in most frequently
- To evaluate how often staff prompting is needed across activities

RELATED LITERATURE

- Research shows that structured, community-based activities improve engagement and social participation for adults with developmental disabilities. Structured programs have been linked to higher participation and more consistent involvement in group settings (Bigby et al., 2021; Friedman, 2022).
- In addition, meaningful group activities support communication and peer interaction, helping individuals build social connections in community environments (McNaughton et al., 2025).
- Overall, the literature suggests that structured and purposeful activities increase engagement and social interaction in adult community programs.

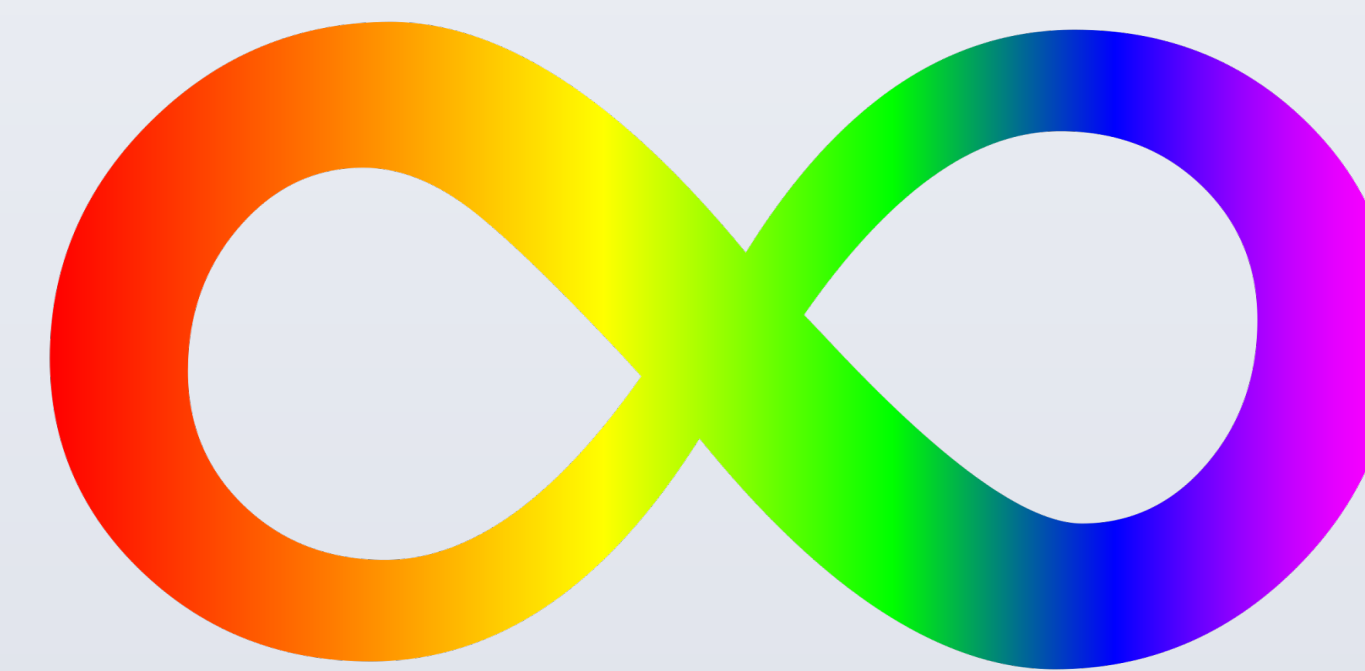
MATERIALS & METHODS

Materials:

- Mobile phone (Notes app for data collection)
- Digital data chart (Engagement, Interaction, Prompting)
- Daily activity schedule
- 3-5 selected clients

Methods:

- Observed clients over 4 days
- Date collected during:
 - Morning meeting (A structured daily group activity where clients share updates, discuss plans, and interact with peers by taking turns speaking and selecting who shares next.)
 - One additional daily activity (e.g., puzzle, basketball at Sports Club, Jeopardy, volunteering at the food pantry)
- Recorded:
 - Engagement (Y/N) (participation in activity)
 - Peer interaction (Y/N) (verbal or nonverbal interaction with other clients)
 - Prompting needed (Y/N) (level of staff support required)
- The same clients were observed across all days to identify participation patterns over time.



RESULTS

- **Morning Meeting:** Consistently high engagement and peer interaction; little to no prompting needed
- **Basketball (Sports Club):** Mixed results; some clients engaged and social, others less involved
- **Puzzle:** Low engagement and interaction; most clients needed prompting
- **Food Pantry (Volunteering):** High engagement and strong peer interaction; minimal prompting
- **Overall Trend:** Activities that are structured and hands-on led to higher engagement and more social interaction

CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing engagement, interaction, and prompting across activities, it was found that structured, purposeful activities such as Morning Meeting and food pantry tasks resulted in the highest levels of engagement and peer interaction, while hands-on group activities encouraged communication between clients and less structured activities, such as puzzles, showed lower participation and required more prompting. Overall, the type of activity appears to play an important role in client engagement, suggesting that routine-based and meaningful group activities may support stronger engagement and social interaction in community-based programs, which is important information for staff as they plan and organize events and activities for clients.

REFERENCES

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