

This report will critically evaluate our use of The Action Competency Learning Process (ACLP) in order to run the physical activity programme. The key physical activities we focused on were 'moving to music' and 'invasion games' and we designed a 6 week programme for our students whom we met twice a week....The Action Competency Learning Process was a very helpful model to use for planning the physical activity programme for our 5 students. This was because it forced us to consider a number of issues from many different angles. Without the use of this model there are a important considerations we would have missed and our overall success would not have been as high....

..Step one (identifying the issue) was an interesting process for me because after going through the whole programme I have now begun to question whether there really was an 'issue' for some of the students with special needs at all. For example.... Our class was required to implement this process as part of our NCEA assessment and we were allocated students to work with. As we went through the action competency process we became aware that some of the students with special needs were already very active. This made me question whether it was actually appropriate that we were allocated a group without too much input from the students with special needs....

..Step 2 (developing knowledge and insight) - was a really important part in working out what the needs and abilities of the students actually were. We met with the students at their school before we started the programme to talk with them and play a quick ball tag game. We found out that Kayla and James were already both very active, Taine and Jackson were only really involved in the physical activity offered by their teachers but loved it whereas Nikau did everything he could to get out of PE and school sports. If we had not used the Action Competency Process we probably wouldn't have even bothered finding this information out and would have steamed ahead with just planning the actual activities. This could have been detrimental to our students and we may have ended up planning something completely irrelevant to them...Having the information about each individual student meant we could not only tailor the activities we offered to what they enjoyed but it also gave us some insight into how we could best teach them. I now really appreciate how different each individual student is and how hard it must be for teachers with big classes...

Step two (developing insight and knowledge) also forced us to consider our own attitudes and understandings towards students with special needs. For this step we had a group brainstorm and we listed down all our expectations, hesitations and questions we needed to find out.

We quickly realised our group held a number of assumptions that needed to be dealt with before we moved onto the next step. For example most of our group were really surprised to hear that Kayla and James were already very active. We had wrongly assumed that physical activity wouldn't have been a priority for them and we were also surprised at the level of understanding the students had of a number of different sports. It feels embarrassing to admit this now but before we spoke to our students I had assumed that they would all be pretty uncoordinated and possibly even lazy. Therefore in my opinion this process was very effective because it forced us to consider our own attitudes towards students with special needs and made us realise that we probably had much lower expectations of their ability to be involved in making their own decisions and participating in a physical activity programme...

Step 5 (Planning) was very useful for us because instead of organising a whole heap of random activities that might not have been pitched at the right level we drew up a list of enablers and barriers for each individual student. It was really difficult to pick physical activities that everyone was going to be comfortable but once we had thought about the specific barriers in detail we were able to offer modifications. For example Nikau struggled with coordination in ball activities and would get grumpy if he thought he was going to be forced into these types of activities. Because we had taken the time to really get to know Nikau and followed the previous steps in the process, we were able to come up with some really good ideas to increase his confidence. For example, we made sure we always used soft balls in the invasion games so it wouldn't hurt him if he didn't catch and we also gave him lots of encouragement when he tried something new. Introducing 'challenge by choice' to Nikau was also really effective and we found that usually when he didn't feel forced into something he was more likely to give it a go. Without going through the previous steps in the process we wouldn't have even thought about needing to offer these options for Nikau and we probably would have just got annoyed that he wasn't participating. This would have also reinforced the assumptions I had about students with special needs whereas now I can appreciate how important the planning and teaching process is for each individual student. I think this is relevant for everybody, not just students with special needs and therefore I believe this process would work for lots of different occasions.

Critically evaluating the process overall

After having a high level of success in implementing our physical activity programme I definitely believe that all the steps in the action competency process are necessary. There is no way we could have offered a suitable programme that catered for each individual in our group without thinking about the deeper issues that I discussed above... We did find that the process wasn't necessarily a step by step thing though and we often found ourselves going back to the earlier steps when something didn't work. For example when Kayla got upset with me in 'moving to music' I had to go right back to step two and consider whether or not Kayla had felt she had a voice in making the decision about what activities we were going to offer. I realised because she was one of the more confident and coordinate students I had taken it for granted that she would just participate in anything....

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Overall I think the way we approached this task was very successful, however there are definitely some things I would change if I were to do this again. For example, I would try and look at gathering as much information from as many sources as possible rather than just relying on our group to come up with all the answers. I think we would have been able to do an even better job if we had worked closer with our students' teacher and possibly even their families when we were working through all the steps. One way we could do this would be to... I also think it is very important to consider this process as more of a cycle rather than a step by step thing that you can tick off and forget about before moving through each stage. If we had more time to meet as a group I would have like to have reflected and evaluated each lesson rather than just evaluating our programme at the end....