

Fit Families

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SPEAKERS

Scott McNamara

Scott McNamara 00:07

All right. Hello, everyone. This is what's new and adapted physical education bringing you a new and exciting episode on a brand new mic. That's a lot more costly than my last few mics. So hopefully this is sounding like picturesque. Right now, I have two great scholars, researchers, teachers, people in the field of adapted physical activity. And they are both at the UW or University of Wisconsin Madison. In the great state, obviously, it was consequences University of Wisconsin. And we have Yeah, and to talk about their research, which is broadly around parent interventions to help their children with disabilities learn skills and and knowledge to kind of help promote physical activity and motor skills. So we have Dr. Luis Kolomna, who's also a Texas Woman's University graduate, fellow graduate. So welcome, Luis, and we have his former doctoral student, and now a postdoc research fellow in the Department of Family Medicine and community health at UW Madison. Laura Prieto. Feel free to correct me. Yeah,

01:23

louder, though. Yeah. All right. Good. Yeah.

Scott McNamara 01:26

And I apologize, I have a Detroit Midwest accent, which is not basically is the worst thing to have, when communicating with anybody with another accent or language.

01:41

So I have a Puerto Rican accent.

Scott McNamara 01:45

So, um, yeah. So I appreciate you both being on the show. I think you both have been on the podcast, but I think it's been quite some time now. And so with that, if you both want to just briefly talk about who you are, and in fit yourself a little bit and how you got into the space, and field of adapted physical activity.

02:08

Alright, so I'm originally from Bogota, Colombia, and I grew up in Las Vegas, Nevada. And I got into adaptive physical activity via dance, like I love dancing. It was my passion, and it continues to be. And when I was in undergraduate students, I was a McNair Scholar, which helps individuals who are underrepresented in higher education and research to pursue doctoral degrees. And so I reached out to Dr. Colonna, and from there really started to learn more about what is adapted physical activity, as well as how to work with children, autistic children, children with visual impairments. And also and more importantly, for me at that moment, working with their parents.

02:56

I'm originally from Puerto Rico, I've always been involved in sport, I was a long jumper that in college, went to GW to do my PhD. And my advisor, were running intervention, physical activity intervention at the time for Latino kid who were obese or overweight. And, as you know, TW long standing reputation about AP. So long story short, I moved to Korea and start doing a lot of qualitative research, interview with teachers and stuff like that, moved to Syracuse that where I learned how to do intervention, and started to meet to interview parents and listening to their stories. And they're learning to create families and here in Wisconsin.

Scott McNamara 03:42

So with that, we'll talk a little bit about Fit Families First, and like kind of how that project has originated. And just so the audience is clear, I'm doing a little bit of work around Fit Families Now to which so I've seen, you know, it's its inaction to some degree. And also I can see why it's so valuable. So with that, and I guess broadly, I'll just say that Fit Families is a kind of a workshop based intervention for parents, where they get information about different skills and such and then sometimes as well, this, we have students, college students working with the kids with autism or autistic children or kids with disabilities, I think generally as well to work on fundamental motor skills and increase in physical activity levels. With that, please like kind of fill in the blanks of additional details about Fit Families. And then also like, tell us a little bit about why that project started, and why you found it to be important to start.

04:44

Well, after I graduated, I can do a balloon interview with Latino families and white families talking with disabilities about physical activities and barriers and facilitator to physical activity. And one thing that we learned that while They love physical activity, they didn't know how to do it. So one time we were doing a program for parents, and one mother told us that she appreciated the lessons that she learned because it's not the same reading about physical activity versus actually doing it. So then with that we developed the first bit families in Syracuse, a poor kid with visual impairments, we taught the parent, how to play with a kid how to do physical activity with them. And then we evolved from visual impairment to start doing the plan for kid without is in a lot of trial and errors in that process. They don't enact that we just develop a multi site study with you on CRTs. About kids with developmental disabilities, because some of the activities that we do for kids with autism are applicable for dancin kid with Down syndrome or, or ADHD, so on, so forth. So. So the how, just by looking into the participant and how we came up with the idea.

Scott McNamara 06:01

And a follow up on that, you know, you said you started with kids with visual impairment or, and children with autism kind of veered into that realm for autistic children. What, what led you to make that shift? As well as why did you choose those kinds of two different groups.

06:23

Leader impairment started because there was a call for proposal to be honest with you that they want to program for kids with visual impairment. So the connection can let's do it right. So with then moving from visual impairment to autism stemmed from the fact that it was getting a little bit difficult to recruit more kids with with visual impairment when I was under limited funding, we are limited on that. So then I decided to play around with the idea of can we do this without Islam. So we change everything that structured, the framework was the same, but we change the content. And, and, again, that led me to then continue to expand in the program to other populations.

Scott McNamara 07:06

And the follow up on that, and then also kind of getting into the content then, because I know that you, you often you offer a variety of topics. And then you also provide, which I think is really unique. You provide specialized equipment on that stuff, as they're kind of progressing through the workshop. So you have specialized equipment that kind of goes with each of those workshops, which I think is like, really, really great, you get that very relevant, very meaningful, they can apply things immediately. But with that, I'm actually really curious as to what topics and workshops you have now, but also, I'm just curious as like what, you know, what shift did you make from that, that the visual impairment workshops to autism and I'm just curious about that.

07:53

Okay, so we can impairment we have more leisure, orientation and mobility, physical motor development, physical activity and sport, and aquatic sort of orientation and mobility, physical activity and sport and aquatics. Those were the topics. So why those physical activity and sport because they land those activities for additional mobility because you need to learn how to navigate the environment if you are visually impaired and aquatics because it's the number one activity for kids with visual impairment. Then when we transition to autism, we focus on sensory motor activities, communication, typical activity and sport and aquatics why sensory motor activities and communication because those are the hallmark or the disability, physical activity and sports because they lacked those opportunities and aquatics because drown in it the number one cause of death among people with autism. So finally with the monocle report, she helped us to do the activities, the aquatic activities and we even wrote a book awhile ago on on different assessment based curriculum. So really cool. But in essence, we tailor the programs based on the needs of the population. So the the easiest thing to do when the multi site study that we did was that the need okay without some are very similar to the little kid with Down syndrome or ADHD, somehow that transition was easy to make.

Scott McNamara 09:25

And can you just like go a little bit deeper to and to like those workshops because I think that's like really, really unique and what you're doing like what, like, who's leading those those workshops? Like kind of, is it like, is there a discussion in there I'm just I'm curious as to what what those look like.

09:43

So depending on the topic, we identify experts in those area or people who are knowledgeable that have similar philosophy than we have. And they go to a lecture with their families the case, go with my students through other type of course On activities, similar to what we do, what they were doing AP. And then the parent Lindley topic we teach them we arranged the full workshop based on the 13th locomotor skill, identify on the end, Third Edition. But also we incorporate physical activity, why we made a connection about fundamental fundamental motor skills and physical activity balancer that the in the second part, the parents get to practice whatever we taught them with the kid. And then at the end of the day, they go home with the equipment, we develop an app that match those activities that they're going to be doing. And that's how it came up. And then having a moving grado student up, you to run the program, so long as the protocol data.

Scott McNamara 10:47

Yeah, and I think you're, obviously, we'll talk well, let's talk first, then about the parents, and the impact for the parents of these workshops. And also, let's start there, like what are the general impacts that we see for the parents were for this programming?

11:06

Yeah, so I'm really thinking about awareness, awareness of what their child's can do. And we saw this both in the Fit Families, for parents of children with visual impairments, as well as parents of children who have autism or autistic children. And that's like a huge thing, like they had never seen their child engage in physical activity, or hit the ball the first time with a bat. And that was a huge experience for them. So really, that awareness. And another thing is the advocacy. So how can we advocate for the programs that we need to see in the community? So for example, in the foot families, for children with visual impairments, they said, Wow, I didn't know my daughter loved swimming so much. And then when they went to go and look into the community, they weren't finding those programs. And so they're like, Okay, well, how then, can we learn to advocate so not only was, oh, I can see what my daughter can do. But it was also now how can I advocate and really, that kind of sparked the fire? Well, we hope too, that it continues to spike the fire for parents, and more importantly, to they learn the skills to teach these motor skills. So I don't know about you, but when I you know, while parents are children's first teachers, the first time I teach something, I'm not very good at it, and I need to practice it. And I need to learn better ways and different strategies, how to how to do it. So that's the same thing for parents and you know, that they're managing so many other things, physical activity many times is not the focus. And so having dedicated time hearing from experts, and also hearing from other parents on strategies, like, oh, I use this one tool, I use this one game in my basement or outside and like, that's really where I see a lot of the benefit that parents get from the workshops in the program.

Scott McNamara 13:00

A lot of things I recently have seen, and come up with just like, you know, recently from talking to other people, and such as in getting reviewer feedback, is that idea that you just brought up, which is competing interests of parents, you know, often when a parent has a child with a disability, it seems like, I'm a parent, I don't have children with disabilities, but I have a lot of competing interests now, of what to do and when to do it and all of that. And so how do you help them prioritize physical activity as well within families or what you're doing?

13:38

Let's go review the theory of planned behavior as a as a framework, you know, and one of the components is attitudes, you know, so we may have a general understanding about important physical activity, but they sometimes don't know how important it is for the kids. So having that shift in attitudes, you know, and giving them the competency and the confidence that they can do it. So CIM a little bit of proceeding over control, because some of them say, Oh, I'm not a coach, I'm not a teacher, but we can teach them how to do so. You know, and, and that's the thing that we're trying to build up on what we know. Yeah,

14:15

and I also think something we added last that family is really cool, but the goal setting sheets so we had parents actually set SMART goals before the workshop and check in on them throughout the intervention and I thought that was really helpful because it shows you don't have to make this huge goal like do something it within your schedule within your capacity

Scott McNamara 14:37

going on kind of continuing down the line of all the people that are impacted on this, what have you seen I major findings major impacts for the disabled children and purposely using identity first language, but like what do you see as your kind of the major impacts of your programming and such for those For the kids, in

15:01

terms of the kids, definitely, even though that we have no measurement, but you can tell that their self confidence is improved, you know, the, the confidence level, the parents tell us that their behaviors are decreasing sometime at home, but they're three, we have seen an increase in their fundamental motor skills that I believe are a prerequisite for physical activity. So that's ensure that what we see, you know, and one of the studies that we'll talk to you mainly about is we saw that two years after the program, the parents continue using the equipment and participating in activities and advocating for the kids, you know, so yeah,

15:40

I would just build off yeah, the motor skills is one of the the improvements that we see within the children who participate, and we have different modalities of the family. So there's the online version in person version. So we do see that those improvements in motor skill performance in both groups. So that was really great to see, especially with our pilot trial that we did.

Scott McNamara 16:05

So I also know that that's something that has come up sometimes, too. So you know, I think we've kind of inferred that that motor skill development is important. But can you both kind of articulate that a little bit clearer to so you know, we see increased local motor skills and, you know, whatever kicking skills and such these fundamental motor skills, how does that, like? Can you articulate a little bit about what that means, and why that's important for a child to kind of gain those skills, if they don't already have them in their kind of quality of life and life moving forward. I

16:41

think and I know that there's a lot of disagreement in this interview. But I, I can, I had extremely good P teachers growing up extremely good. They taught me how to move they take will take the nasty with the score with the dance, we did a lot of stuff. And because of that, I feel like I can do any sport that doesn't involve eyes. Very good. So don't ask me to go snowboarding because I tried that like three years ago for the first and last time. So I'm the one to do that. Because in Puerto Rico we do, we didn't do anything related to snowboarding, or anything but any other sport, I can fake it, I can do it. You know, like the pros, even though we did it ignorantly and Rose, fast I can I can do it a little bit. So if you had that building block of learning how your body can do, when you put all of that together, you'll be more prone to do physical activities, you know, even running that even running is a local motor skill. If you don't know how to run there, how you're going to be able to do activities like activity like skipping, you need to learn how to go move both sides of the body, in my opinion, that is that will help you to ride a bike if you want to. But again, I don't have the evidence to say that there's a correlation between skipping and riding a bike, but to use common sense.

18:04

I also think that when we look just like a doctor Cardona was saying about he had really good PE teachers that helped him feel confident performing skills. I myself was in dance, but I did not feel competent throwing a ball or you don't feel confident dribbling a basketball. And so, for me, at least from my perspective, those weren't options for engaging in physical activity. While I was like I would run when I was Elementary School, and now that's one of my main forms of physical activity. So of course, like we don't have this is anecdotal data, but something to consider, like just feeling good that you can accomplish something. And that's what we saw from the parents that they were aware and they were more confident in teaching now moving forward, then how are the children feeling about developing those skills? And we started doing a couple of interviews with the children in the program. And so that's something that yeah, I would love to see you continue as well.

Scott McNamara 19:01

I think it makes a lot of sense. And I have seen I know that dad is a little mixed on some like that physical activity and motor skill correlations but you know, I think there generally is a consensus that it does matter.

19:12

So the other day it's stolen from South Carolina and I think that he just published a paper about when the mega motor scale and are kicking and kicking, I'm soaker Winnemucca moreschi or something along those lines. I'm pretty sure that I have not read the paper. I think I saw something along those lines.

Scott McNamara 19:31

Yeah, I do. Also remember, Ally Bryan was on our podcast years ago, but it was a really great one. It was called something like Houston, we have a movement problem. And she talked about studies they did, where they did TGM D test with preschoolers in America, and then ones in Europe and the European ones that often early childhood PE and physical activity interventions are a daily or weekly

thing where ours are not and much higher. motor skills are cross and what was crazy, they had much higher motor skills, like in sports that are not native to them. So they have like a higher two handed swing, which is not like something that like students in whatever Norway that she looked at. I'm very, very broadly referencing the study. So if how these students or whoever's listening to this, I'm sure there's more specifics than that. But yeah, so And also, I think, you know, I do think also, to Laura's point is that, it's, it's a lot about, like, your self perception of yourself, right? If I'm able to do it, I'm more likely to do it. Which is also kind of common sense, I think. So the last group, then, because you have kind of three groups involved in the Fit Families, you have the parents, you have the children, and then you also have the college students, which you're like, can you talk a little bit a about like, the training process and their involvement, as well as their overall impact? Or like what their impact walking away from the program is for them?

21:06

I wouldn't I will say a little bit, but I will allow you to expand on that, because she was in charge of the training of the art historian along with the other graduate student, but boring essay, well, we did it we preview what we're going to do in the program, you know, we taught them about teaching skill, but some of them these were the very first time working with a kid with with a disability. But they need to have certain attitudes, you know, a certain demeanor, I will say, but it wasn't an intense training, ranging from teaching them how to collect the data, how to do the administer the PgMP, to how to teach and come become familiar with the fact that they had access to the app that they could see, they really had to come up with a game, the game already pre loaded, so so that,

21:53

yeah, so I have a couple of things. So the first one, training them to do the test to gross motor development, both administering and scoring it, we worked with them. It was like a couple of 10s of weeks, like Dr. coluna was saying, and we were really looking at like, Okay, do they understand the purpose of the test, then? Are they scoring it at an 80% reliability? And then they did practice videos with that we had chosen to then see, okay, what are we getting? Right? What are we getting wrong? What are we looking at when we say this criteria is D rotates? The rotation of the shoulder or that shoulder like exactly what is each criteria mean? And then once we went through that, we then did a post test, we using the same reliability videos that are available on the TGN, v3 test website. And that really helped us understand like, okay, are they help, are they able to then score, then based on that, we would either put them into that scoring role or then administer a role. And then they would do a practicum, essentially looking at how to administer this just because just because they can score, it doesn't mean that they are ready to administer the tests themselves. So that was also another part of the training. In addition to that, we also did so we had weekly lab meetings, and in those weekly lab meetings, we would prepare all the material that we need for the upcoming workshop. So that would include all the documents the parents and children needed, but then we'd also have a debrief afterwards. So there was always things that came up that were completely unexpected. And so that how then do we work with behavior management, how then do we work with maybe the child that they're working in isn't learning the skill, or they're having really hard time with a certain criteria, so those debrief sessions were guided by a lot of the literature and the information we've got from physical education from Dr. Koh, Luna, and working with each other to build those strategies. I remember a student it was really awesome to see, we were working with social stories and her her her child that she

was working with just needed to be running. So the running across the hall space. And she's like, we have to figure out how to help him focus on the activities that we're working on. So she worked with the parent. And this is something we talked about, she worked with the parents to figure out what his likes and dislikes were created a social story with that parents about, okay, how are we going to show that these are the tasks that we're going to do in that moment, then created that social story, showed it to the child edited it so that each workshop it improved? And this was a beautiful soldier story with an astronaut? And like, how do you put on the astronaut clothes on then how then do we like move into these different spaces? And so the training was iterative, right? We kept doing it throughout the program, because that's the program itself. We're learning from each other and we're also learning with the children that were Working with? Yeah.

Scott McNamara 25:04

For the undergrad students that you're working with as well, like, do you know? Like, is there like kind of long term like so they leave your class or they leave the project? Have you seen like any of them? I don't know, gain interest or anything of that? Or like, how do you see the long term impact for that group of students?

25:24

I think the student will work in food families, when I say a big percentage of the student ended up going to grad school, going to medical school, and when they talk to the interviewer, either as a PT or OT, when they talk about Fit Families, that open door, because even though we are not trained OTS or PT, some of the behaviors or the disposition that we teach them are very comparable, one OT and PT. So they that opened the door for them.

Scott McNamara 25:54

So kind of going until, like, the last are kind of big questions now of big picture things. So you know, I know you have a lot of ideas moving forward Fit Families, and how you expand it. You know, when people listen to this podcast, you know, most of them are not going to be in Wisconsin, or New Hampshire, or wherever, you know, we have all over the place. Right? So, you know, what does this mean to them? Right? What does this mean? And so how do you see this program? Expanding? And then also, like, if I'm a PE teacher listening to this, like, what can I take away from what I'm listening to in this podcast, in my own practice, or thoughts?

26:37

For PE teacher, I would say, they need to communicate with the parents, I give them ideas of what to do, you know, and, and no, definitely to be anything plan for you. Now, with the technology, we call yourself, this is what we're going to do next week, practice this activity with the kids that does that. So one of the things that we see ourselves doing is, is expanding this to Spanish communities. And as you know, I'm Latino and, and I feel like they need to provide to the community and in academia, as you also know that there's not that many people who looks like me, in our field that I feel like it's our responsibility to deliver for that community. So, so very soon, you're gonna see a lot of great thing coming to our from our lab related to the Latino community.

Scott McNamara 27:24

So I think you're looking at expanding as well, right? So are you looking at also different places? Like, is this going to be expanding in that way as well? Or should I Is this like a secret

27:40

we are going to continue to expand it and, but I didn't want to expand something until I knew that have an impact or an effect, you know, so I knew that the prom makes sense, but I wanted to make sure that, okay, we actually can improve motor skills, you know, and we are planning to continue to expand it to older stay till the university 20 years, you know, so we can expand it. But it takes a village, it's not just expanded, you need to have good connection with the people that you want to work.

28:15

Yeah, and I would also say like every community has different needs. So then like adapting, adapting it to that community takes a lot of work and a lot of engagement with them even before just saying, Oh, we have this program, like let's do this in your community. And so I would love to see that families expand, I think there's a lot of value within including parents and also finding strategies on how to include parents like talking about a PE teachers. There's a lot that goes on in that job. And I'm sure like, okay, then I also have to talk to the parents, like, how am I going to talk to the parents? And what are some strategies that I can use? And I think there's a lot of possibility there with families.

Scott McNamara 29:00

I'm going back real quickly to because you're saying like, you know, like, you have to know the places that you're going and such. And the strategies going back, you know, you said as well that you're really focused on kind of giving back to like your, your community of like being a Latino American, and such and what what specific, like, what specific barriers then would in such would would you need to know about to work with those different communities with kids with disabilities?

29:33

The pre funding is the main issue, you know, you need to have the funding to be able to run a program like this. While even though we try to make it very inexpensive, are still there some funding that is required to run a program and particularly if you want to do a large, randomized control trial so that you need money to be able to do it. So working with a university that has the capacity, capacity to to train Students like university who have an AP program would be ideal place to start. And even they don't need to be research university, but they have, they need to have a non traditional preparing PE teachers, you know that that would be very advantageous.

30:20

I also think, off that line of funding funding for students or staff that can help with the interpretation with the translation, because that is a lot of work. And many times, I think it's like, oh, you're bilingual, you can also translate that, but that takes a lot of time, a lot of dedication. And on top of that, like when we had a family in the last bit families, the mom only spoke Spanish. So we had a student do live, and I'm gonna live interpretation would be Translation Translation, it during the workshop, and I think that's what we could do at that moment. But then thinking strategically, okay, then who needs to be there so that everyone can have that information in real time? Do we have a Spanish speaker and an English

speaker? Like, what does that look like and thinking with the team, and the location that you're working with? To make that possible?

Scott McNamara 31:14

Yeah, I was kind of thinking, just from my own novice mind, although when I lived in Detroit, we have one of the biggest Arabic populations, actually, I think it's Dearborn is the biggest Arabic population outside of the Middle East. And so we worked with that group quite a bit. And they had very unique kind of barriers. And often it was language based, and then them just often perceiving that things would not be accessible for them was often a thing that we would see with that group, is that they just would assume that nobody would be able to speak their language. And so then they just assumed that wouldn't be accessible for them. I don't know if that's also something that you've seen. But

31:51

yeah. I would also think about, like having a community champion there. So if someone has done the program, and they found it, very helpful, then they can also think like it is accessible. This is why it's accessible. How can we bring individuals like me to this program as well? So I think that's part of it as well.

32:14

I don't know. No. And I think it's, that's why it's important to be talking to them to see what accommodations they need, you know, before you start a program, don't assume that they need us. And they need that because not all Latino parents need the information translated into Spanish. Many of them are bilingual. So just ask them, and they will tell you. Absolutely. Yep.

32:37

I would also say like beyond language, what types of activities are they interested in? Do they want different types of music or different types of activities that include more than the parent or who the siblings are? You know, asking those questions are really helpful. So you know exactly what that family needs in that moment in that intervention.

Scott McNamara 33:01

One of the things that you brought up about the translation I just was in the meeting. So I was in a meeting in northern New Hampshire. So New Hampshire is on the border of Quebec, on the very top of us. And, and so we had some people that only spoke French and our, our meeting, and I just, I was really like extra blown away, because I didn't know this. But zoom now offers like a free, you can press a button and get a translation service. So they had somebody on the other line translating in real time for that person. And it was like a service that they offered. I don't know if you're aware of that. But I just saw that like three weeks ago for the first time. And there's literally like, a button in the Zoom stuff that allows you to do that. So I was pretty impressed by that.

33:44

They have that feature in Spanish, too. I have a friend that was using it the other day, too. I don't know the accurate the accuracy of it. I haven't seen it in action, but I'm glad that they have no idea.

34:01

Yeah, I also think like beyond, again, beyond language, how are you connecting? Because if I am in a meeting, and everything's being translated to me, so I'm already trying to understand what was happening then beyond that, how are you connecting beyond that language?

Scott McNamara 34:18

Yeah, absolutely. I used to I had when I was teaching, I had a bunch of, as I said, a bunch of Arabic students, and we and we uniquely, like we didn't have like anybody that spoke their language in our school because they all spoke kind of separate languages, too. So I would put stuff in the Google Translate and give it to them. And he'd always like laugh at me basically, because it like would come out to be like, you know, like, not meaningless, almost, I think, when I would ask him or something. But yeah, obviously, you know that I think that's like, that's always like the teaching strategy that I always push to my students is that everyone you build a relationship, like that goes with like disability, right? Like well teach about social stories and about visuals and so on and so forth. But the end of the day, the first strategy before you go to any of those strategies, is that you build a relationship and you know, the person and their needs. And I think that's like, that's probably like, for everybody, like teaching colleagues and whatever it's like before you start going into like, all the like, whatever, different groups and such that you're going to do things. It's all about actually knowing that person what they need. So with that, I appreciate your time. I appreciate your wisdom and sharing your programming and all your great research. Is there anything else that you all would like to share with our audience?

35:44

You'd like your dues got an app or giving us the opportunity to talk to your audience and and, and this is very valuable information so you can people who don't have access to higher rates on time they can have access to it. So thank you for the invitation.

36:00

Yeah, thank you so much. It's been a pleasure to be on and I look forward to more Conversations