



## **Utilizing Structured Activities to Enhance Learning: a Review of Recreational Therapy Services from a Global Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Recreational Therapists (RTs) are trained to use structured and adapted recreational opportunities with the goal of improving physical, cognitive, social, and emotional functioning of people with disabilities, illnesses, or limitations. Within the United States of America (USA), Recreational Therapy (RT) is a rapidly growing profession with RTs working in a variety of settings that range from rehabilitation and hospital based settings to nursing homes and schools. In school-based settings, RTs are generally employed by schools or school districts, or provide outside consultative services to teachers. Grounded in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a law specific to the USA, structured and adapted recreational opportunities are designed so to improve students' functional, recreation, and academic skills, assist help them to learn necessary social and communication skills, and help them develop social skills necessary for appropriately engaging in inclusive recreation activities. RT is identified as a "related service" within the IDEA. Related services are those services required to assist students with disabilities in achieving educational goals, participating in non-academic activities, and participating in extracurricular activities along with children without disabilities. RT services are provided within the areas of assessment, planning, direct service interventions, and evaluation. RTs who hold the credential of Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist™ have received educational preparation specific to preparing them to provide RT services in healthcare and school-based settings. The purpose of this paper is to provide a review of how the need for structured and adapted recreational activities transcends culture and geography, and how RT is uniquely positioned to provide such services and is poised to expand services. Using examples of how RT services are provided in the USA, an argument is presented for how similar services can be extended specifically to school-based programs internationally.