

McEwen, I. R. (1989). *Position as a control parameter of social-communicative interactions between severely multiply disabled students and classroom staff*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, West Lafayette. George R. Karlan (Advisor): 172 pages of text, 159 references, 15 appendices, 17 tables, and 0 figures.

McEwen, I. R. (1992) Assistive positioning as a control parameter of social-communicative interactions between students with profound multiple disabilities and classroom staff. *Physical Therapy*, 72, 634-647.

Development of nonsymbolic communication competence is a common educational goal for students with severe and profound multiple disabilities. When these students' disabilities include severe physical impairments, positioning in adaptive equipment is often an integral part of their school programs, and it is an intervention that has been observed to influence both the students' communicative behaviors and their opportunities for social interaction. However, there is little empirical evidence to support these observations. The purpose of this study was to begin to provide such evidence by examining position as a controlling element of social-communicative interactions between students and classroom staff.

Ten profoundly multiply disabled elementary school-age students and classroom staffs were observed when the students were in a wheelchair, in a sidelyer, and lying "freestyle" on a mat. Each videotaped observation was comprised of two segments, an unstructured component and a structured interaction designed to provide communication opportunities for the students. Adults' and students' communicative behaviors were coded from the videotapes, then coded data were analyzed by repeated measures analysis of variance and nonparametric procedures.

Among the findings were that adults initiated communication at higher rates when students were in their wheelchairs and that they initiated communication more often with students who were functioning at higher levels of communication development. An effect of position on student communicative behaviors was found only for the lower functioning students during the structured observation, when they engaged in more interaction in the freestyle position. The small number of students, the variability within and between students, and the limited communication during the unstructured interactions may have prevented identification of other positioning effects that could exist.