

Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED.

Guide to Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Play

Featuring Special Olympics Young Athletes™

FIRST EDITION

**Special
Olympics**
New Jersey



LEARN. PRACTICE. PLAY. UNIFIED.

GUIDE TO GROSS MOTOR EDUCATION AND PLAY

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FOREWORD
By
David C. Hespe
Commissioner of Education, State of New Jersey

The Department of Education takes pride in the relationship it has developed with Special Olympics New Jersey (SONJ), the organization that has done such phenomenal work with students with disabilities and their peers over the years, most recently with the development of its Unified Sports model. SONJ has been the driving force behind the inclusive physical education movement in New Jersey and a key partner with the Department and those districts in the forefront of this programming. It is broadly accepted among educators that organized physical activities, including competitive athletics, are important for physical well-being, emotional health, and social development of the general student population. The value of organized physical activities for students with a wide range of physical and developmental disabilities has also been a guiding principle for many practitioners in special education. The benefits are many, including those impacting the general population, but extend to cognitive development, building self-esteem and other factors noted in the pages that follow.

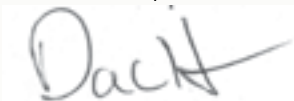
What is perhaps not as well understood, even by many in the field, is the subject of this population – a unified, inclusive approach that brings those with and those without disabilities together on the same playing fields. Individuals without disabilities are not there as coaches or mentors – although those opportunities may present themselves – but as equal participants. The result of this type of activity is beneficial for all participants. While the value of physical activity for all students is recognized by educators, parents and the community, this integrated approach and how it can be implemented is not widely known. SONJ has developed this guide to provide strategies and steps to initiate integrated physical education programs in schools along with examples of successful programs operating in our State.

In response to Governor Chris Christie’s signing into law, the Equity in Sports and Physical Activity Act (P.L. 2014, Chapter 10) in June 2014, SONJ has resolved to support individual school districts throughout the State in developing and implementing sustainable inclusive physical education, sports, and fitness programs. I applaud this initiative by SONJ and by the districts stepping up to take advantage of it.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to those who have collaborated in developing the principles and strategies presented in this publication, including collegiate faculty and other researchers, K-12 teachers, coordinators, students, and parents. Hopefully, this guide will generate interest and enhance the ability of districts to implement their own inclusive physical education programs.

Every student deserves a genuine opportunity to experience and successfully participate as an equal member of a team. I encourage you to use this guide in your schools to develop physical education opportunities that are inclusive and adhere to the vision of the Special Olympics Unified Sports® program, “Play Unified. Live Unified.”

David. C. Hespe



Commissioner of Education
State of New Jersey



NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION FOR HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION AND DANCE

**Affiliated with Society of Health and Physical Educators/America
and the New Jersey Education Association**

The New Jersey Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (NJAHPERD) is pleased to endorse the **Special Olympics New Jersey's Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Play**, as a valuable resource for all physical education professionals. This manual provides educators with the strategies and information needed to ensure success for all students. A quality physical education program addresses the learning styles of every student and ensures that every student is included, accepted and respected. All students have equal opportunities to learn skills, increase their fitness level, and participate in physical activities with others. This resource will contribute to the professional development of educators to help them design meaningful, learning experiences that recognize each student's abilities and help every student set goals that foster a healthy, active lifestyle.

NJAHPERD values equality and access for all students, not only in the health and physical education program but in all sports, intramurals, interscholastic sports, and recreational activities. As an organization, our goal is to provide the highest level of professional development to assist educators meet the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Health and Physical Education and this resource is a welcome addition that will make a difference for all New Jersey's students.

Jackie Malaska

Executive Director

New Jersey Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

INTRODUCTION

Play Unified. Live Unified.

The transformative power of sports to change lives is at the core of the Special Olympics Movement. Through the power and joy of sports, environments of acceptance, respect and inclusion are created. Sports and play break down the traditional barriers that keep people apart by opening hearts and minds, and changing behaviors through shared, meaningful acts of sportsmanship, accomplishment, community and friendship.

Special Olympics Young Athletes™ provides an early introduction to sports and to the world of Special Olympics for children ages 2 to 7 with intellectual disabilities. Children participate in fun activities designed to improve motor skills, hand-eye coordination and other abilities important to mental and physical growth, all through play! They meet new friends, develop social skills and gain the confidence to play and talk with other children in their neighborhood and on the playground.

Special Olympics Unified Sports® joins people with and without disabilities together as teammates, each one a meaningful and equal part of the same team. It is inspired by the simple principle that training, playing and competing together lead to understanding, acceptance and friendship on and off the playing field.

Together, Unified players not only strengthen their fitness, improve their sports skills and develop social skills, they

challenge existing stereotypes about people with intellectual disabilities, and demonstrate to all that we are more alike than different. In schools, inclusive sports and physical activities level the playing field. They provide opportunity and access for those who would otherwise sit on the sidelines. They create welcoming communities where all students are invited to play and empowered to reach their full potential.

The real Special Olympics sports experience is one in which people of all abilities lead healthy, vibrant lives, grounded in ongoing sports and physical activity, sound nutrition, and a deeply held conviction to improve, compete, achieve and demonstrate their personal best to themselves and their community. Special Olympics focuses on what athletes CAN do by taking the focus off disability and revealing each individual's unique abilities, opening the door to unimagined potential and possibilities for all.

Special Olympics New Jersey believes that for every student this path to sports and social inclusion begins with a purposeful, meaningful and rewarding Inclusive Gross Motor Education experience. Special Olympics New Jersey is committed to ensuring that every child has equal opportunities to participate safely and successfully in physical play and recreational activities. We believe that all young people can and should progress through school with the knowledge, fitness, skills and attitudes needed to lead active, healthy, fulfilled lives.



THE GOAL


The goal for all students in New Jersey's schools is to be afforded equality, access, opportunity, respect and acceptance. ***Special Olympics New Jersey's Play Unified School Partnership Program*** begins with a school's commitment to ensuring that all students, throughout the course of their development, participate in gross motor education, physical education and activity that promotes learning, achievement and enjoyment.

Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Play draws on Special Olympics' longstanding expertise in accessible sports activities, promoting inclusive schools and communities, and advocating for individuals with disabilities to provide educators with the tools to meet this goal. The resource employs Special Olympics Young Athletes™ strategies for use in an Inclusive Gross Motor Education program as a way to assist educators in bringing students with and without disabilities together to learn the skills and knowledge needed to participate successfully in inclusive physical activities and games in their schools and communities.

Play With a Purpose

Special Olympics Young Athletes™ places quality inclusive gross motor activities and play experiences at the core of a positive, socially inclusive school culture. Inclusive play offers children of all abilities organic learning experiences that provide opportunities to improve developing gross motor skills, generalize social skills, develop self-confidence and integrate cross-curricular connections through play with their peers. Therefore, our goals are to:

- Introduce children with intellectual disabilities, ages 2 through 7, to the world of sports through a developmentally appropriate progression of motor skills activities and games.
- Support educators in delivering accessible, achievable and, most importantly, fun learning experiences to all students so they are successful in physical education, seek opportunities to become active members in school and in the community, and play successfully with peers.



Through the power of sports, people with intellectual disabilities discover new strengths and abilities, skills and success. Our athletes find joy, confidence and fulfillment – on the playing field and in life. They also inspire people in their communities and elsewhere to open their hearts to a wider world of human talents and potential.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. is designed to provide inclusive and adaptive teaching strategies for making early childhood fundamental motor movement, physical education and sports programs accessible to children of all abilities, from Pre-K through high school and beyond, by integrating the variety of sport and education programs that Special Olympics offers into one comprehensive framework.

The focus is on providing opportunities for all students to reach their personal best and experience the joy that comes from sport and physical activity.

Two Volumes

Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. reflects Special Olympics' commitment to providing opportunities for participation and inclusion for a lifetime. The resource includes two companion volumes, each with three parts. They are designed to provide a continuum of strategies and activities that support individualized instruction, enabling all students to participate at their own level in order to develop confidence and experience success.

- **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Play** focuses on gross motor skill development through structured and unstructured play strategies for preschool and kindergarten students.
- **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Physical Education and Sports Activities** focuses on fundamental and sports specific skill development, and opportunities to apply those skills to game play in school and the community, for students from elementary through high school and beyond.

Each book includes three sections:

- **Learn:** Special education information, instructional strategies and best practices for inclusion and differentiated instruction for teaching Inclusive Physical Education or Inclusive Gross Motor Education.
- **Practice:** Activities and drills with suggested tips for modifications and adaptations, and tools for observing students' ability levels.
- **Play UNIFIED:** Suggestions for creating co-curricular, interscholastic and community based opportunities for students at all ability levels to apply skills learned in early childhood classes and physical education to participate in recreational and competitive game play activities.



Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. presents skills in a scaffolding approach that is based upon ongoing observation and assessment to determine students levels of progress and success. It includes:

- A framework for defining the characteristics of a high quality Inclusive Physical Education or Inclusive Gross Motor Education
- A practical resource to assist physical education teachers, preschool teachers and other educators in meeting the unique needs of their students with different abilities,
- Strategies for collaboration among physical education teachers, special services, general education and other school personnel to understand and meet the needs of each student, and
- Activities and drills with suggested tips, modifications and adaptations, and tools for informal assessment of progress.



Part One:

Learn

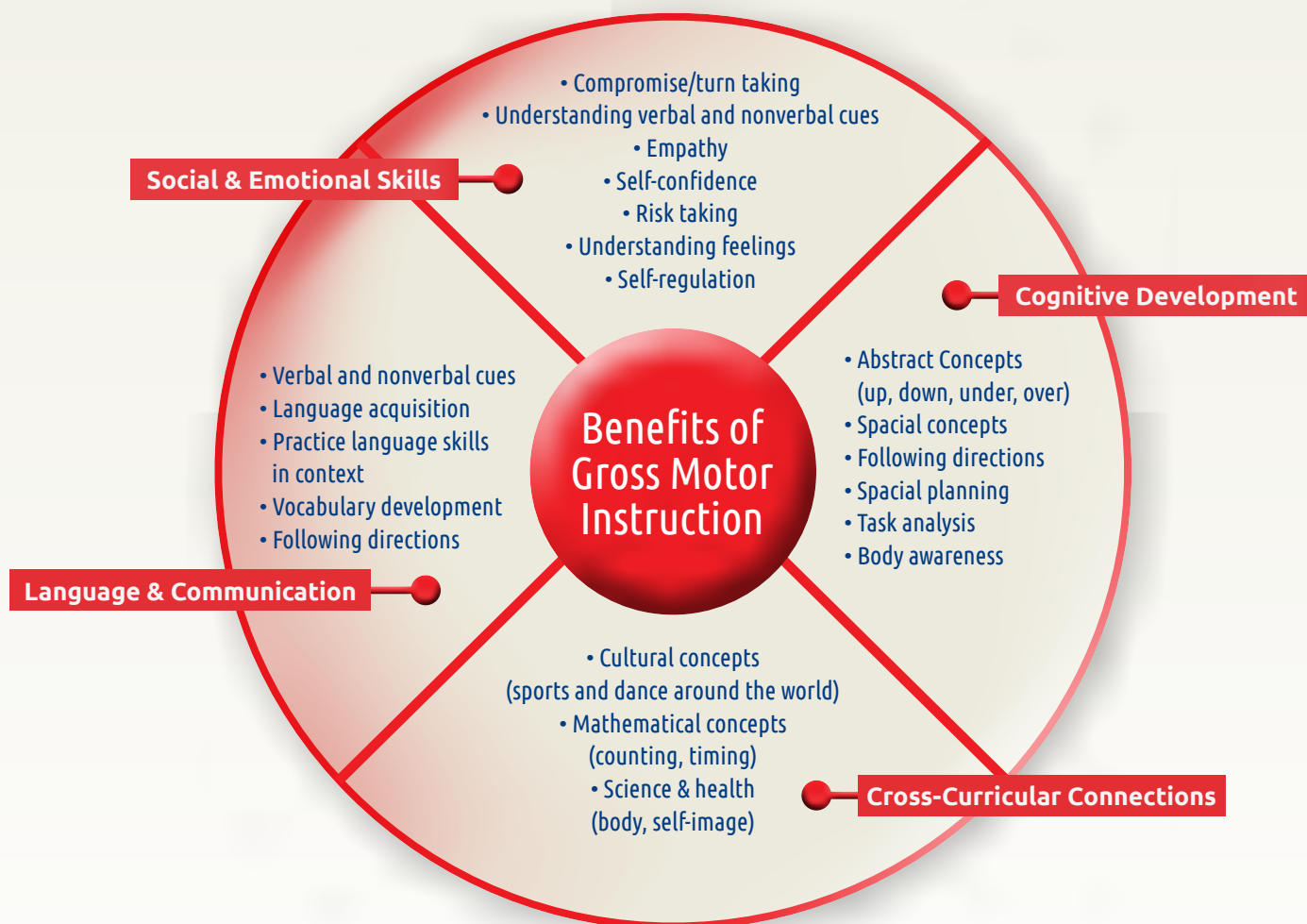


"Inclusion is a philosophy that asserts all individuals, regardless of ability, should participate within the same environment with necessary support and individualized attention. Inclusion is more than simply placing individuals together, it's a belief that all individuals belong and are valued" (Kasser & Lytle, 2005, p.5).

THE BENEFITS OF GROSS MOTOR EDUCATION & PLAY

Watching young children play is one of the great joys of being a teacher of preschoolers. Their innocence, imagination and joy is contagious. As they explore and navigate the world around them through play, young children learn many concepts of life. Their quick and curious nature, and boundless energy are a perfect conduit to learning. Children need space and time to crawl, walk, run, jump, throw a ball and play games in order to learn to navigate the physical world around them. By incorporating gross motor and movement learning into the classroom, educators are providing the foundation for a lifelong love of activity, reaching the whole child rather than just teaching isolated skills.

Pressures put upon educators and administrators to focus academic instructional time on reading, math, science and social studies often compromise teachers' abilities to incorporate gross motor education into the daily classroom routine, even though they understand the important role increasing physical activity can play in improving cognitive development. The benefits of gross motor education and play go well beyond addressing physical needs and development. Effective gross motor education advances the social, emotional, academic and cognitive milestones of young children. By incorporating both structured and unstructured time for gross motor development, early childhood educators can utilize movement to enhance cross-curricular connections and thematic instruction, and enrich self-directed and imaginative play.



WHY INCLUSIVE GROSS MOTOR EDUCATION & PLAY?

A defining characteristic of a developmentally appropriate Inclusive Gross Motor Education and play program is that it provides meaningful learning experiences that bring students of all abilities, learning styles, cultural backgrounds and interests together to reach common goals. Creating friendships and sharing experiences in a welcoming environment, where all students are valued, respected and enabled to reach their full potential, helps young children form their schema of community inside and outside of school.

The “Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs,” released jointly by the Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS) on September 14, 2015, states that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs, where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations. (“ED & HHS Release Policy Statement,” n.d.)

The U.S Departments of Education and Health and Family Services states, “Inclusion in early childhood programs refers to including children with disabilities in early childhood programs, together with their peers without disabilities; holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations; and using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social-emotional), friendships with peers, and sense of belonging. This applies to all young children with disabilities, from those with the mildest disabilities, to those with the most significant disabilities.” (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf>)

In a fully inclusive setting, children with and without disabilities are afforded the opportunity to see and value the unique gifts in everyone, including themselves. All students are fully engaged in instructional activities, sharing equally and learning together. Although content and activities may be modified or adapted, students with disabilities have access to learning the same concepts, skills and content as all other students in the class. The result is educational equity and access for all students.

Inclusion requires educators to believe in the concept that success for each student can be different. The educator

Sharing the same space is not inclusion. Inclusion is about building a community of learners; it is about sharing everything else!

must be willing to modify and adapt lessons and activities to ensure that each student learns and achieves success at his own pace and according to his own abilities. Educators see the abilities of all students as contributing to the whole class. By fostering an atmosphere of acceptance during the early childhood years, educators lay the foundation for building inclusive school communities that will impact their students while in school and potentially throughout their lifetime. In addition, they establish the pathways for future participation in Special Olympics Unified Sports® and inclusive social activities within their schools.

The Scientific Base for the Benefits of Inclusion

- Individualized evidence-based strategies for children with disabilities can be implemented successfully in inclusive early childhood programs.
- Children with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, can make significant developmental and learning progress in inclusive settings.
- Research suggests that children’s growth and learning is related to their peers’ skills and the effects are most pronounced for children with disabilities.
- These outcomes are achieved when children with disabilities are included several days per week in social and learning opportunities with their typically developing peers and specialized instructional strategies are used.
- Typically developing children show positive developmental, social, and attitudinal outcomes from inclusive experiences.

(“Policy Statement on Inclusion,” 2015)



WHAT IS AN INCLUSIVE GROSS MOTOR EDUCATION AND PLAY SETTING?

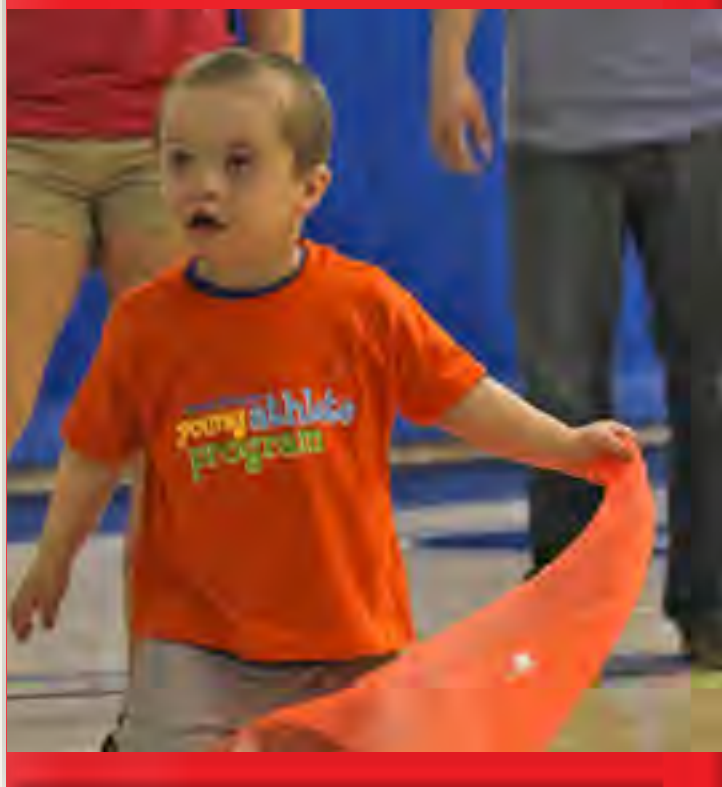
The Goal of Participation in an Inclusive Setting

The goal in providing Inclusive Gross Motor Education and play is to ensure that all students, with and without disabilities, learn in an environment that meets their abilities and needs, and maximizes the essential opportunities for social, motivational and educational interaction with age appropriate peers.

Least restrictive environment (LRE) is a term used to describe the educational environment that meets the needs and abilities of a student with disabilities, while providing the greatest opportunities for learning alongside age appropriate peers. A quality inclusive program supports a continuum of environments that address each student's specific abilities. This could be self-contained participation, full inclusion and/or participation in a combined environment, with and without supports and modifications. Participation should be viewed as fluid and flexible, where students can move from one environment to another as appropriate. The LRE will look different based on each school, classroom, pupil demographic and schedule, **but most importantly, each individual student's needs.** Many early childhood education centers or elementary schools that also include preschool classes have self-contained and/or inclusive preschool classes. In environments with self-contained classes, priority should be placed on engaging age appropriate peers during gross motor education and play whenever scheduling allows. In inclusive classrooms, efforts should be made to cooperatively group regular education students and special education students during gross motor education and play times. By providing Inclusive Gross Motor Education in the LRE, teachers allow for the enhancement of peer modeling, friendship, opportunities for generalization of speech and language skills and improved physical skills.



The least restrictive environment is not synonymous with full inclusion.



During both structured and unstructured Inclusive Gross Motor Education, there are many ways to ensure the LRE is offered to all students.

Examples of how to integrate the concept of LRE into your preschool classroom.

- Differentiating instruction in an inclusive classroom setting allows students to receive gross motor instruction at the appropriate level while still being in an inclusive setting.
- Utilizing paraeducators to lead small group instruction.
- Using mixed ability grouping when direct teaching and when practicing skills and activities.
- Offering Unified (inclusive) recess or unstructured playtime. This is most successful when students have combined access to similar equipment in both their classrooms and recess areas.
- Teaching skills and activities to students in the self-contained setting three times per week and inviting general education students into the self-contained setting to practice the skills and activities two times per week, or inviting the students in the self-contained setting into the general education class two times per week. Be sure to check with the Child Study Team to review any additions that might need to be made to a student's IEP to facilitate this type of model.



PRESCHOOL CLASSES THAT RECEIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION

For some preschoolers, leaving their classroom to go to physical education class is part of their regular schedule. A successful Inclusive Physical Education program supports a range of participation options designed to provide the best learning environment for each student. It is beneficial that students are initially assessed on their motor skills, fitness levels and learning abilities by their Individual Education Program (IEP) team members and their physical education teacher to develop an instructional plan, and determine the LRE that will provide a safe and successful learning experience.

The LRE is different for each student, based on learning abilities. For some students, the LRE can be participation in the general physical education class without any modifications or additional supports. Physical education may be the subject area where some students excel and, although they may be eligible for special education, they can be highly skilled and participate equally alongside their classmates. However, there are also students who participate in a general physical education class that need some modification or adaptations in the form of equipment, additional directions, more time to process information and feedback from a peer partner, paraeducator or the teacher.

ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION: A SERVICE NOT A PLACEMENT!

When a student needs one or more modifications to successfully learn in physical education, the term “Adapted Physical Education,” (APE), is used to identify his physical education program. Adapted physical education can be offered in a variety of environments, ranging from an inclusive general physical education setting to participation in a self-contained physical education class.

The adapted physical education program includes the same concepts, skills and content as the general physical education program, however it applies differentiated instruction, teaching strategies, equipment and assessments specially designed to meet the needs of students with different abilities. Adapted physical education is not a placement. It is a service that must be provided to ensure safe and successful participation. Therefore, a child who is eligible for adapted physical education may receive those services in an Inclusive Physical Education class.

For additional information visit www.apens.org

In New Jersey, adapted physical education is taught by a certified health and physical education teacher. New Jersey does not require a separate certification in adapted physical education to teach students with disabilities.

“Adapted Physical Education is physical education which has been adapted or modified, so that it is as appropriate for the person with a disability as it is for a person without a disability.” (“What is Adapted Physical Education?”, 2008)



LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR INCLUSIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION

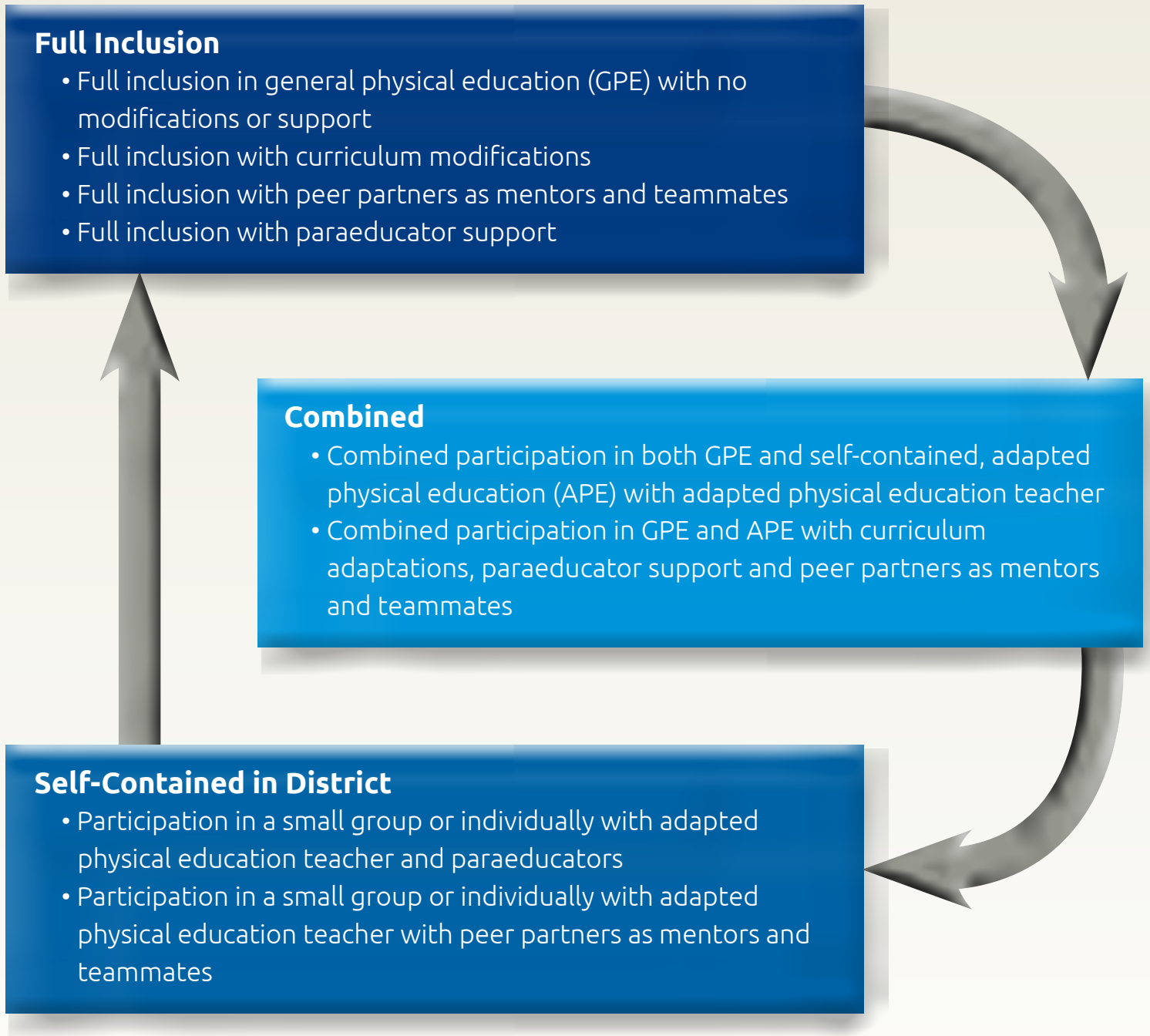


Diagram 1. In determining the least restrictive environment for participation, options along a continuum of environments, from self-contained to full inclusion, can be combined to address each student's specific abilities and needs. Placement should be viewed as fluid and flexible, where students can move from one environment to another as appropriate. Be sure to check with the Child Study Team to have necessary documentation in the IEP for any change in instructional settings.



LEGISLATION GUIDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND SUPPORTING EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is a federal law that guarantees students the right to a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). It sets out parameters for early intervention, special education and support services. Originally signed in 1970, IDEA was reauthorized in 2004 by President George W. Bush.

Listed below are components of IDEA that guide the services and supports that are offered to infants and children from birth to age 5:

- **Part C:** Final regulations defining eligibility and services provided for infants and toddlers ages birth to two years. Sets out a model Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) for states to use to provide a clear and defined structure of services and supports provided to families.
- **Part B:** Section 619: The preschool section of IDEA that provides the regulations of services and supports for children ages 3 – 5 that have been identified as having a disability. Each state must have a 619 coordinator.
- **LRE:** Key component of IDEA that emphasizes that students with disabilities should be educated with students without disabilities to the greatest extent possible.
- **Child Find:** The process with IDEA that assists Local Educational Agencies (LEA) in finding individuals with disabilities in need of educational services and supports.
- **Early Intervention:** Refers to support services provided to improve the cognitive, physical, social, emotional and adaptive development outcomes of children ages birth to 3. Early Intervention should occur in a child's natural environment whenever possible.

("Frequently Asked Questions," 2014)


Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its implementing regulations also apply to students with disabilities in public school districts, and mandate that non-academic and co-curricular services and activities be provided in a manner as necessary to provide students with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in such services and activities. For athletics and interscholastic sports, school districts must provide reasonable modifications that are necessary to ensure that students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate in athletic programs. However, school districts may deny participation in an athletic program when the district shows that the modification would represent a material alteration to the athletic program. An example of a modification that would likely represent a material alteration is adding a fifth base in baseball, which would alter the game such that it would be unacceptable even if all competitors were affected equally ("Section 504," n.d.).



Head Start

Head Start is a national program run by the United States Department of Health and Human Services that regulates and provides early childhood education, nutrition and family supports for low-income families with young children. For more information, go to: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>



SPECIAL OLYMPICS NEW JERSEY SCHOOL RESOURCES ALIGN WITH NEW JERSEY TEACHING STANDARDS AND HEAD START LEARNING OUTCOMES

A COMMON MISSION WITH THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The New Jersey Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) supports preschool curricula that meet the following criteria:

- Methods of inclusion of students with disabilities
- Content and teaching strategies that are clear and research based
- Content that is taught with focus and integration
- Opportunities for child initiation and engagement
- Components that are developmentally appropriate
- Evidence of benefits

("Curriculum & Assessment", 2014)

Curricula aligned with this criteria include:

- The Creative Curriculum
- Curiosity Corner
- High/Scope Preschool Curriculum
- Tools of the Mind Project

All curricula in alignment with the DECE criteria include both gross motor goals and goals for establishing engagement at home, which can be met by utilizing Special Olympics New Jersey Young Athletes™ school, community and home resources.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS YOUNG ATHLETES™ DIRECTLY ALIGNS WITH THE NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION 2014 PRESCHOOL TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

Below are areas where Special Olympics Young Athletes™ and **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED.** strategies and activities can be integrated into educational practice to meet standards and best practice recommendations set by the New Jersey Department of Education Early Childhood Division.

Home, School and Community Partners

Preschool programs should ensure opportunities for building community partnerships and engaging other community resources. This can include:

Information and referrals to community programs and resources

Participation in Special Olympics New Jersey community-based sports programs

Collaboration with community agencies to help with the delivery of services

Schools host a Special Olympics information session or engage other Special Olympics New Jersey partners

Family Support

Preschool programs should recognize families as the experts of their children and offer:

Opportunities and access to activities and agencies that foster networks of support among families enrolled in the program

Special Olympics New Jersey community sports-based programs and family programs

Learning Environments

Inviting and supportive learning environments should include:

Accessible learning environments with age appropriate materials

Young Athletes and adaptive equipment

Individualized adaptations and modifications for preschool children with disabilities

Special Olympics New Jersey Young Athletes school resources

Purposeful play experiences

Special Olympics New Jersey Young Athletes activities guide, home and community programs

Materials and activities appropriate for a range of developmental levels

Special Olympics New Jersey Young Athletes home and school activity guides with equipment

Social/Emotional Development:

Young children's social/emotional growth and learning occur as a result of their interactions with others and are interconnected with their development in the physical and cognitive domains.

Standards 0.1 – 0.5

Addressed through direct teaching of gross motor skills, as well as unstructured play time with access to Young Athletes equipment

Health, Safety and Physical Education:

Standard 2.4: Children develop competence and confidence in activities that require gross and fine-motor skills.

Addressed through direct teaching of gross motor skills, as well as unstructured play time with access to Young Athletes equipment

Approaches to Learning:

Standard 9.1: Children demonstrate initiative, engagement and persistence.

Addressed through direct teaching of gross motor skills, as well as unstructured play time with access to Young Athletes equipment

Standard 9.3: Children identify and solve problems.

Addressed through direct teaching of gross motor skills, as well as unstructured play time with access to Young Athletes equipment

A copy of the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards can be found on the State Department of New Jersey Department of Education website, Early Childhood Education at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/ece/guide/>.

("Early Childhood Inclusion Program," n.d.)

LEARN. PRACTICE. PLAY. UNIFIED.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS YOUNG ATHLETES™ DIRECTLY ALIGNS WITH THE DOMAINS OF HEAD START EARLY LEARNING OBJECTIVES FRAMEWORK.

Below are areas where Special Olympics Young Athletes™ and Special Olympics New Jersey's **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED.** strategies and activities can be integrated into educational practice to meet Domains, Sub-Domains and Goals recommended by the Head Start Early Learning Objectives Framework.

Domain: Approaches to Learning

Sub-Domain: Emotional and Behavioral Self-Regulation	Goals P-ATL 1, P-ATL 2, P-ATL 3, P-ATL 4
Sub-Domain: Cognitive Self-Regulation	Goals P-ATL 5, P-ATL 6, P-ATL 7, P-ATL8, P-ATL 9
Sub-Domain: Initiative and Curiosity	Goals P-ATL 10, P-ATL 11, P-ATL 12, P-ATL 13

Domain: Social and Emotional Development

Sub-Domain: Relationships with Adults	Goal P-SE 2
Sub-Domain: Relationships with Other Children	Goals P-SE 4, P-SE 5, P-SE 6
Sub-Domain: Emotional Functioning	Goals P-SE 7 and P-SE 8
Sub-Domain: Sense of Identity and Belonging	Goals P-SE 9, P-SE10, P-SE 11

Domain: Cognition/Mathematics Development

Sub-Domain: Cognition – Mathematical Development	Goal P-MATH 10
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Domain: Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

Sub-Domain: Gross Motor	Goals P-PMP 1, P-PMP 2
Sub-Domain: Fine Motor	Goal P-PMP 3

A copy of the Head Start Early Learning Objectives Framework, as well as the Head Start Performance Standards, can be found on the Head Start website at: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/sr/approach/cdelf>



DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE AND SPECIAL OLYMPICS YOUNG ATHLETES™

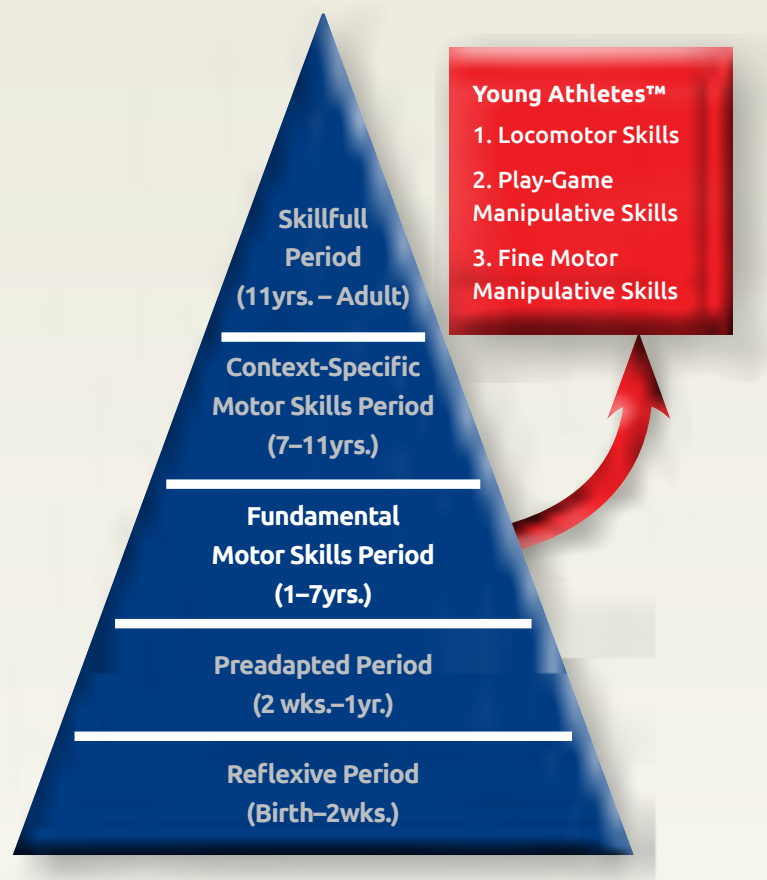
Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is an approach to teaching that is centered on the research of how young children develop and learn, as well as the knowledge and understandings of effective early education. DAP provides an individualized, child-centered framework for designing learning experiences and programs that promote optimal learning and development. This framework assists in accomplishing achievable goals by ensuring that they are based on a child's developmental levels and abilities, and are responsive to the cultural and familial context in which she lives and learns.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) highlights three core considerations of DAP in promoting quality early childhood education:

- **Knowing about child development and learning.**
Knowing what is typical at each age and stage of early development is crucial. This knowledge, based on research, helps us decide which experiences are best for children's learning and development. (See "12 Principles of Child Development and Learning" from NAEYC's DAP Position Statement).
- **Knowing what is individually appropriate.**
What we learn about specific children helps us teach and care for each child as an individual. By continually observing children's play and interaction with the physical environment and others, we learn about each child's interests, abilities and developmental progress.
- **Knowing what is culturally important.**
We must make an effort to get to know the children's families and learn about the values, expectations, and factors that shape their lives at home and in their communities. This background information helps us provide meaningful, relevant and respectful learning experiences for each child and family. ("3 Core Considerations of DAP", 2009).

In line with DAP, Special Olympics Young Athletes introduces children with intellectual disabilities, ages 2 through 7, to the world of sports through a developmentally appropriate progression of motor skills activities and games.

Special Olympics Young Athletes is based on Clark's "mountain of motor development" (Clark, 1994; Clark, 2005; Clark and Metcalfe, 2002) and the work of Robertson and Halverson (1984) who described development of sport-type skills.



Special Olympics New Jersey Young Athletes is designed to be implemented in three venues, all supporting one another and the whole development of the child:

1. **Home:** In New Jersey, parents and caregivers of children with intellectual disabilities can receive a free kit of equipment and an activity guide with suggestions for use in their home. The primary goal is to foster a positive relationship between the child and caregiver. A secondary goal is to promote foundational sports skills for future participation in Special Olympics training and sports programs.
2. **Community:** Unified guided play sessions, based on the Special Olympics Young Athletes skills and activities, are offered free of charge in communities throughout New Jersey. Parents, caregivers and families play together to develop networks of support, community engagement and gross motor and social skills.
3. **School:** Early childhood educators and physical education teachers utilize the Young Athletes activities presented in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Play** to facilitate structured and unstructured Inclusive Gross Motor Education in preschool and physical education classes.

Utilizing Special Olympics Young Athletes in early childhood learning environments supports DAP, in addition to being aligned with NAEYC's 12 Principles of Child Development and Learning. ("12 Principles of Child Development and Learning That Inform Practice", 2009).

The following components of the Special Olympics Young Athletes™ resources are consistent with recommended practice from national professional organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2003), the National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play (2010), Association for Physical Education (NASPE) (2002) and Council for Exceptional Children's Division of Early Childhood (DEC) (2007):

- School resources and home components
- Training of teachers and assistant teachers
- Inclusion of stakeholders (parents and teachers) in the evaluation
- Occurrence of intervention, primarily in inclusive school settings
- Valued content is learned through active engagement and play
- Focused, intentional teaching using strategies such as guidance, direct instruction and modeling
- Clear connection to theoretical underpinning
- Rigorous research design and methodology
- Evidenced based practice

(Favazza, 2011)

Children participating in the Young Athletes intervention for 30 minutes, 2 to 3 times per week for 8 weeks gained an average of 7 months in Object Manipulation and Locomotion skills, and 9 months in Stationary skills. Those improvements persisted over time as those students maintained a 4 month advantage in Object Manipulation and Locomotor skills over those who did not participate. (Favazza and Siperstein, 2014).



STRUCTURED VS. UNSTRUCTURED GROSS MOTOR EDUCATION AND PLAY

Direct instruction of gross motor skills is necessary for ensuring safety, meeting learning standards and creating full and rich learning opportunities for preschool students. However, too much structured activity for young children can inhibit their natural development and the curiosity that leads to creative thinking. It is important to provide a balance of structured and unstructured play to allow for creative expression, the spontaneous learning experiences and peer interactions that come from self-directed play, while still providing direct instruction to meet the standards in curriculum.

To ensure that the diverse needs of all learners are met, employ a combination of structured and unstructured time for play and gross motor development.



Unstructured activity is child-directed and takes place in a child's naturally occurring environment, without the direct instruction of a teacher. Unstructured activity offers:

- Opportunities for children to practice self-advocacy, compromise and collaboration skills.
- Situations that promote creativity and self-directed play.
- Opportunities for organic friendships to form and social learning to occur.
- Chances for children to develop self-confidence and internal problem solving.
- Opportunities for children to explore at their own pace.
- Time to de-stress from structured activities.

“Teaching must be intentional and focused on how children learn and grow. Children are active, engaged and eager learners. Good teaching practices build on these intrinsic strengths by providing developmentally appropriate instruction and opportunities for exploration and meaningful play.”
 (“Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Birth to Five”, 2015).



Structured activity is planned, directed and organized with an instructional purpose. Structured activity offers:

- Direct instruction on how to perform an activity, thereby reducing chance of injury.
- Opportunities for corrections in alignment or performance to aid in meeting developmental milestones.
- Situations for “teachable” moments regarding communication, turn taking and sharing.
- Opportunities for informal assessment.
- Assistance in meeting IEP goals and individualized instruction.
- Promotion of skills that lead to healthy lifestyle.
- Chances to foster relationships between teacher and child.
- Opportunities to teach following directions and rules within context.
- Chances for bringing together students with differing abilities and interests in order to form friendships.

BEST PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE GROSS MOTOR EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Like all young people, students with disabilities desire the same opportunities to be active, explore their potential and experience the challenges and rewards of physical activity and competition. **The goal for high quality Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Inclusive Physical Education is grounded in the Special Olympics Young Athletes and Special Olympics Unified Sports® mission to introduce young children to the world of sports and to provide meaningful opportunities for people with and without disabilities to play alongside one another, on and off the playing field.**

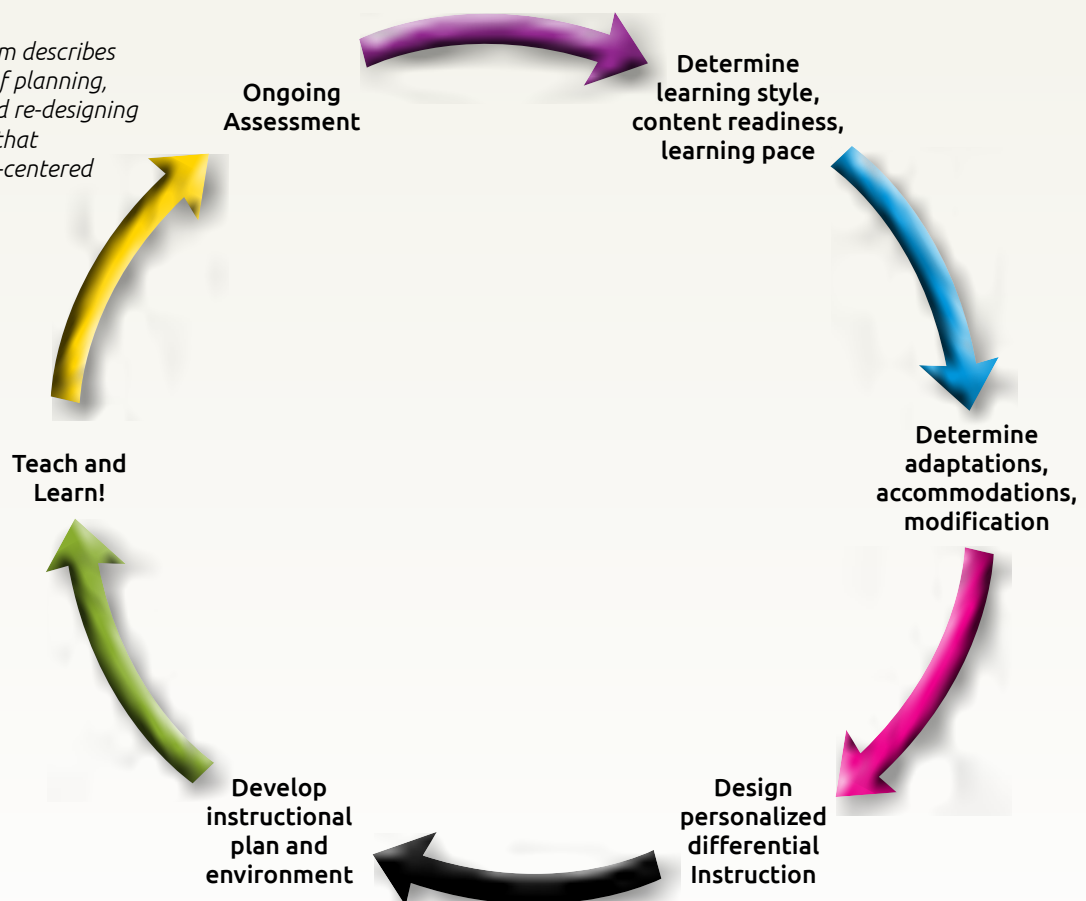
In Special Olympics the focus is always on what athletes CAN do. Athletes are applauded for the courage and bravery they demonstrate in their attempt to reach new goals and break through barriers. Embracing this simple philosophy is the first step to creating a classroom where every student can succeed, be safe and have fun.

Use the Teaching – Learning Cycle

Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. is based on providing a flexible scaffolding of content and skill development that offers opportunities for all students to learn and practice safely, as they progress along a continuum of advancing activities, at their own individual pace, with their own individual goals and outcomes. This involves ongoing assessment to ensure that each student is at the appropriate place on the continuum so he is able to continue to learn and apply skills. A student's learning objectives are individually designed to ensure that instruction is developmentally appropriate and the student achieves success. Students need to master the pre-requisite skills successfully, with consistency and confidence, before adding more challenges and advanced skills.

**"Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."
Special Olympics Athlete Oath**

Diagram 3. The diagram describes the recursive process of planning, teaching, assessing and re-designing the instructional plan that contributes to student-centered learning.



Design a Successful Inclusive Learning Experience

As a teacher, your goal is to help each student reach her full potential. To accomplish this goal you must apply a variety of teaching strategies that meet each student's learning style. This necessitates envisioning what your students CAN do, not making assumptions about what they cannot do. Accomplishments may not be the same for every student, but they are equally valued. Goals should be set to enable each student to continuously learn, progress and enjoy the experience.

Use People First Language

Communicating respectfully about and to your students is the first step in gaining their trust and creating a mutually respectful team. Always put the individual first and the disability behind; for example, "My student with Autism," as opposed to "She's an Autistic girl." Avoid labeling students in any negative way, but do feel free to respectfully ask your students questions about their disability. When in doubt, always ask students if and/or how they prefer to talk about the disability. It is important to understand your students fully and their disabilities. (Athlete-Centered Coaching Guide, n.d.)

Know Your Students

Understand your students' abilities, interests, psychosocial strengths and challenges. Students who receive special education services are most often classified by a condition, disability or disorder. Do not make assumptions about what your students can or cannot do based on stereotypes or preconceived notions related to a disability identification. Talk to other teachers, service providers, parents and most importantly, your students. Access their IEPs to learn about their learning needs and strategies for success.

Meet Your Students Where They Are

Each student's instructional plan should start where he is ready to learn. Implementing an inclusive program can require detailed and thoughtful planning to ensure you are providing equal opportunities for all.

- Identify what skills, abilities and knowledge your student will need to learn to perform the targeted activity or skill.
- Set achievable goals for student learning and plan for modifications in equipment, presenting directions, student organization for activities and how content will be taught.

- Conduct ongoing assessments through observation of how students are responding to the lesson, or use more formal assessments of skills and concepts to ensure your students are learning and progressing. Planning modifications are not an afterthought, but included as the lesson is developed.

Create a Welcoming and Inclusive Learning Environment

An inclusive environment recognizes the value of differences, and that respect, acceptance and teamwork are core class values. Share your belief that all students contribute to the class, and are viewed equally as leaders and team members.

Understanding Your Students' Sensory Sensitivity

Students' sensitivities to sound, smell, light, texture and touch can interfere with their ability to focus, to feel comfortable participating, or to be motivated to try a new skill or game. Know if your students are hypersensitive or hyposensitive to different sounds, textures, colors or a type of equipment.

- Learn about any sensory aversions your students may have and what may trigger inappropriate behaviors so the situation can be altered or avoided.
- Designate a rest/break space in the gym or on the field where a student can go if they need time to relax, rest or take a quiet break from the action.
- Consider the acoustics in the room and if you need to lower music, use visual start and stop signals and provide adaptive equipment, such as headphones and extra time for students to become acclimated to the space, equipment and sounds.



Model Acceptance

Students carefully observe how their teacher interacts with students who have disabilities. Employing strategies to include all students in all activities sends a strong message that everyone has an equal right to learn and enjoy physical activity and sports.

Use a Team Approach

Collaborate with other colleagues, utilize trained peer partners and engage paraeducators for guidance and in-class support. Everyone involved brings different ways to help the student achieve success.

Be Positive, Patient and Provide Time

Depending on their abilities, students may need more time, more reinforcement and more repetition. Keep your expectations high for every student. Be patient. Learning a skill may take longer. Be positive, keep it fun and celebrate every accomplishment!

Ensure Safety

Safety and security within the space, both physically and emotionally, are essential for everyone. Make sure students know how to use the equipment, and are prepared to help each other and be respectful. Have a plan for all types of emergency situations, and make sure students with disabilities are informed on how to react and have ample opportunities to practice for fire drills, lock downs and evacuations.



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE GROSS MOTOR EDUCATION, PLAY AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Effective inclusive teaching requires the integration of a variety of instructional strategies selected to address the multiple learning styles of the students in the class. During Inclusive Gross Motor Education, play and Inclusive Physical Education, this also includes the design of an accessible learning environment.

Listed below are strategies that can be applied to assist students with learning a skill, participating in a team activity or sport and learning game concepts and behaviors. Many of the strategies are not only appropriate for students with disabilities, but for students without disabilities as well. This is referred to as the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principle which allows for everyone to benefit from the modification or adaptation of the curriculum or physical environment. You can offer several variations of a game and let students make choices about their participation level.

One strategy is to offer the students a choice for the modification. For example, ask which type or size ball they would like to play with. For more information visit the National Center on Universal Design for Learning at: www.udlcenter.org/

Modifications in activities must be implemented so they are accepted by the other students and do not limit their advancement or motivation. Acceptance of variations on a game or activity can be a challenge for students who are highly skilled, however using a variation that includes others demonstrates how everyone can be involved.

PROVIDING APPROPRIATE MODIFICATIONS, EQUIPMENT AND SPACES FOR SUCCESS

Equipment Included in the Young Athletes Classroom Kit:

The Young Athletes Classroom Kit is designed for children ages 2 – 7. The equipment is colorful, sized appropriately and coincides with the activities included in the *Practice: Young Athletes* section of *Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Play.*

Create a Gross Motor and Play Center

- Use pictures of the activities at the center to provide options and ideas for students.
- Make equipment accessible and make sure it is organized and labeled.
- Provide ample space for movement that also ensures safety.
- Post clear rules, using pictures and text.
- Choose a theme or skill to highlight each week or month.
- Direct teach the activities and then allow students to choose the activities they enjoy at the center.
- Invite cooperative groups of diverse learners to the center to promote socialization and allow friendships to form.

Equipment Modifications and Adaptations

Modifications to equipment are designed to decrease injury and increase success. Balls, Frisbees, balloons, pucks, bats, rackets, paddles, sticks, bases, nets, goals and fitness equipment can all be adjusted to meet the needs of each student.

- **Change the ball size** – Make the ball or sport object (puck, shuttle) larger or smaller.
- **Length or width** – Change the length of the striking implement (bat, stick, racket) to be longer, shorter or wider.
- **Weight** – Offer striking implements or balls that are lighter or heavier.
- **Grip** – Make the grip larger, smaller, softer or molded to fit the student's hand.
- **Composition/texture** – Offer a variety of balls and striking implements that are made of foam, fleece, plastic, rubber, cardboard or other materials.
- **Colors** – Use equipment in many colors for organization, the student's favorite color or for visual contrast in the environment.
- **Height or size** – Lower the height of a net, goal or base, or hang on a diagonal, use larger bases marked with numbers or colors, increase the size of a goal, or change the height to increase accuracy in aiming at a target.
- **Sound, light, pictures, signs or colors** – Use colored pinnies or scarves on a goal, net or base for increased identification, and to emphasize location.
- **Keep equipment organized** and in a consistent location to help a student know where to obtain and return equipment.



Examples of equipment provided in the Special Olympics New Jersey Young Athletes Classroom Kit.

Space Modifications and Adaptations

This includes fields, courts, classrooms, playgrounds or other spaces designated for the gross motor or physical education program.

- **Change the length or width** of field or court for a game or practice.
- **Increase or decrease boundaries** to make activity achievable and gradually increase or decrease to appropriate area.
- **Designate space or a boundary** for positioning for an individual who needs this limitation. For example, designate a square on the volleyball court or a defense zone in soccer.
- **Clarify boundaries** and mark positions clearly. Use different color lines, cones or flags to help clarify court or field space.
- **Change the lighting or temperature** for students who are hypersensitive to the lighting or temperature indoors or outdoors.



"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."

Benjamin Franklin

PEER TO PEER TEACHING: PEER PARTNERS OF DIFFERENT ABILITIES TEACH AND LEARN TOGETHER – AS MENTORS AND TEAMMATES

Students of all abilities can lead and have the power to positively impact their school communities by promoting social inclusion.

The integration of peer teachers is a recognized strategy for increasing teacher effectiveness and providing authentic inclusion experiences. But, it must be implemented in a cooperative, inclusive culture and with proper preparation and training to avoid establishing social and performance hierarchies between students with and without disabilities that counter authentic inclusion and even reinforce stereotypes. Students become “peer partners.”

An inclusive peer partner program provides appropriate opportunities for students of all ability levels to lead and teach. It is structured as a supportive community of learners, not as a service experience where students without disabilities are recruited solely to help the students with disabilities. Here, students are empowered to work with their peers and together find ways to make the activities work so everyone in the class can participate successfully.

During both structured and unstructured inclusive gross motor instruction, students learn the lessons of inclusion, respect, acceptance and that they are more alike than different. It is during this time that students meet new friends and teammates they may never have met, and continue these friendships in and out of the classrooms, and on and off the playing field.

Peer partners can be integrated along the continuum of least restrictive environment options. Whether in an inclusive, self-contained or combined setting, peer partners are invaluable in their contribution to enabling all students to learn at their own pace while promoting social inclusion throughout the entire school community.

IDENTIFYING PEER PARTNERS

Preschool or kindergarten peer partners are classmates of similar age or slightly older who participate in the dual role of mentor and teammate. Look for the natural friendships that are emerging in the class and invite those students to participate. Build off these relationships to build a meaningful and mutually reciprocal peer partner program.

Elementary, middle school or high school students can also be peer partners to your preschool and kindergarten students. Many schools have established peer buddies or partners clubs where students without disabilities volunteer to work with the students in the self-contained classes, or are part of a club focused on inclusion, acceptance and diversity. These are the students that have already stepped up to offer help, have a comfort level around students with different abilities or are already leaders for inclusion. These students will make caring peer partners and recruit their friends to be involved. Middle and high school students can help teachers host a Young Athletes Unified Game Day or other events during the school year.

These roles can be taken on by peer partners with and without disabilities, depending on their interests, abilities and skill level:

- Reinforce directions
- Demonstrate skills
- Help obtain, set up or return equipment
- Provide positive feedback
- Model appropriate classroom and social behaviors
- Help students transition from one activity to the next
- Be a partner for learning skills or a teammate during a game
- Share new ways of communicating and approaching learning
- Come up with ideas for making skills accessible and fun
- Be a friend in and out of the classroom



WE ARE MORE ALIKE THAN DIFFERENT: FACILITATING DISCUSSION AND AWARENESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Interacting with peers with disabilities can be a new experience. Students may not know what to expect or do. As a teacher you cannot disclose a student's identified disability to her peers. However you can provide strategies to facilitate skill demonstrations, feedback, providing directions, equipment use and communication. In early childhood environments, the differences among students are not always apparent. Discussions and lessons can focus on how students are more alike than different, how our differences make us unique and who we are, and how all students learn and communicate in their own way and at their own pace. High quality picture books, videos and presentations that promote themes of acceptance, patience and friendship can be used to facilitate positive, meaningful interactions that engage students in exploring and understanding together.



Peer Partner Strategies for unstructured Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Play

- Cooperatively group students with and without disabilities during center time.
- Provide visual instructions with images and text.
- Make sure equipment is equally accessible.

Peer Partner strategies for structured Inclusive Gross Motor Education

- Provide students with and without disabilities a leadership or modeling role.
- Offer modifications to students with and without disabilities based on their individual needs and developmental level.
- Assign teams and partners that are diverse and include students with and without disabilities.



PROMOTING APPROPRIATE LEARNING BEHAVIOR

When a student exhibits what is generally perceived as inappropriate behavior, it may be to avoid participation, to seek attention, to communicate or to escape the situation. It may not be intended to be defiant, aggressive, annoying or interruptive. These behaviors may have a justifiable cause or be initiated by an event, the environment or a situation that occurred before or during class. Once the cause is identified, the teacher can use strategies to help the student gain control and participate safely and successfully. Maintaining consistency in expectations and appropriate consequences will help the student be a successful learner and player. Sometimes setting unreasonable expectations can overwhelm students and they may not know how to communicate their misunderstanding or frustration.

Identifying what situations, sensory preferences and activities initiate behaviors that impede learning is the first step toward helping a student gain control. Is the environment too noisy, is there a long time to wait to take a turn, is listening to multiple directions too confusing, or are there sensory aversions?

Strategies to Promote Positive Behavior

- Designate a rest area in the space for the students to go when they are overwhelmed or need a physical break from the activity.
- Communicate clear rules for learning. Use three to five rules posted in the space written in language that defines what students should do to learn and be safe. Add pictures to support the text.
- Demonstrate what following the rules looks like to provide a positive example. Connect action to the words. Practice the rules.
- Communicate a stop signal that is consistent. Define what stopping means. Use red colored markers, claps or whistles to consistently signify stop.
- Use a consistent routine for attendance, warm-ups and partner or group assignments.
- Collaborate with students to establish a signal to use when a break is needed.
- Use close proximity when giving directions. Sit or stand close to the student to help maintain focus on the lesson.
- Use positive feedback when an appropriate behavior is exhibited. Consider what motivates behavior; extra time in the gym, stickers or other tangible rewards.



LEARN. PRACTICE. PLAY. UNIFIED.

- Clarify and communicate consequences for inappropriate behavior that are individualized for the student.
- Plan for transitions in activities and inform the student when a change is going to occur.
- Call the student's name first when you have a question or need to reinforce directions so he will be ready to hear the direction or question.
- Clarify boundaries for an activity or game to help with spatial awareness and positions.
- Provide opportunities for student choice.
- React to inappropriate behaviors in a neutral voice, speak privately to the student, and use the phrase, "I want you to..." to be direct about the appropriate behavior needed to participate.
- Know the student's strengths. Perhaps she leads the warm-up, demonstrates an activity or helps with equipment.

Avoid

- Students picking teams
- Long waiting lines
- Elimination activities
- Complex directions
- Testing one at a time while peers watch
- Using large group high level competition activities
- Using exercise as punishment

SUCCESSFUL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Establish and Follow a Routine

Create a gross motor lesson plan with a sequence of activities that students can expect each time. Routines provide clear expectations, consistency and comfort for many students. Begin each lesson with a greeting or warm-up session. Establish a routine procedure to obtain and return equipment. Clearly mark practice and play stations, and end with a group stretch or equipment clean-up.

Establish Clear Rules and Learning Behaviors

Students should know what is expected of them and the consequences for inappropriate behavior that interferes with their learning and the learning of others. Explain and demonstrate appropriate learning behaviors, such as taking turns, greeting others, sportsmanship, helping one another, and being a good listener. Show them where and how to find and return equipment. Role playing the correct behavior will reinforce expectations. Use "If/Then" language. For example, "If you place the equipment on the rack instead of throwing it, then you can continue the activity for five extra minutes."

Set Predetermined Spots

Assign students a designated place for warm-ups or listening to directions. This strategy helps students become organized and feel secure about where to stand or sit. Use spot markers, tape marks, lines on the floor, squad formations or circles.

Set up Small Group Stations Led by Peer Partners

Provide a space for students who need or prefer to work one-on-one. Trained peer partners and paraeducators can assist students as they participate in small group learning along with everyone in class.



Provide Visual Schedule

Display a visual schedule listing the activities that will be conducted during the lesson. The schedule can be on chart paper for everyone to view or on individual sheets of paper. Include a number sequence, a picture and/or the words for the activity, and a place to check off when completed. You may also include the amount of time for each activity. Use a table format to help organize the information.

Plan Activity Transitions

Abrupt changes can be confusing. Let students know when there will be a change from one activity to the next. Give consistent cues that indicate transitions and a clear signal when an activity has begun or stopped. This can be a vocal call for stop, a bell, buzzer, whistle or other sound. Be sure to check for students with sound sensitivity. Establish a consistent warning signal. For example, a one-minute warning call can be used, as well as a ten to one countdown or a yellow card held up for 30 seconds, then a red card for stop.

Incorporate Rest Area and Rest Breaks

Provide a space where students can rest if they become tired or overstimulated by the environment or activity. This space can be on the bleachers, a mat off to the side or a comfortable chair. Students can also take a break by getting a drink or taking a walk in the hall outside of the space with a paraeducator.



Tips for Successful Communication

If your student is nonverbal or her speech is unclear, you may feel awkward saying you do not understand.

- Ask her to say it again, to slow down.
- Ask her to show you.
- Explain that you do not understand, but you will keep trying.
- Do not pretend you understand or turn away. She will know and it may cause frustration and even anger.

Don't assume your student doesn't understand; he may simply need more time to process and respond.

- Speak slowly.
- Use gestures.
- Make eye contact.
- Provide extra time to reply.
- Use cues and short phrases.
- Repeat directions several times.



COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY

Students with disabilities may have a variety of speech, language and communication challenges and can often be misread or underestimated. Receptive language may far exceed expressive abilities, meaning they can understand much more than they are able to communicate to you verbally. It is important to communicate often to ensure your students understand and are engaged in the lesson. Learning strategies to communicate effectively with students who have speech, language and communication challenges can be obtained from the speech therapist or Child Study Team.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

These strategies help students with understanding directions, routines and game play. They provide them with the tools to successfully communicate their ideas and feelings to others.

EMPLOY SEVERAL COMMUNICATION METHODS.

When conveying information that includes verbal communication, use gesture, cues (thumbs up, high fives) and pointing to pictures, as well to applications on smart phones and tablets.

BE CLEAR AND CONCISE.

Use short, simple directions. Divide a long sequence of complex instructions into short chunks of information. Use a step-by-step approach to ensure each part of the direction is clear. For example, "Get a ball and stand on the line." Then add the next direction, "Bounce the ball around the path of cones."

USE VOCABULARY THAT MEETS THE STUDENT'S COGNITIVE LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING.

Identify new terms and demonstrate the meaning. Use repetition of terms, flash cards, PECS charts and white boards posted in the classroom or gym with key terms to help reinforce memory and ask the student to identify the item or concept.

USE CONSISTENT TERMINOLOGY.

Always use the same words for the same action. Give consistent cues for transitions and starts and stops.

REPEAT THE DIRECTION.

Students may need the directions repeated several times. Watch the student as you are talking to see if he may have lost attention or is unable to comprehend your directions.

FOCUS ATTENTION.

Call students' names first to make sure they are looking at the demonstration. When needed, physically prompt your students to look at you. Use phrases to focus attention such as, "Watch me," "Look at my feet," or, "See how I lift my elbow."

USE CUE WORDS.

Use single words or short phrases that emphasize essential components of a skill or direction, such as, "Hands up," for catching, or "Step and throw," to emphasize a sequence of actions.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING.

After a direction is given, ask the students a question to ensure that they understand what you are asking them to do. Use specific phrases such as, "How many bowling pins do you need?" or, "What will happen first to begin the game?" These specific questions can replace statements such as, "Any questions?" "Do you get it?" "Do you understand?" Allow for time to process the questions and for the students to respond.

LEARN HOW STUDENTS OPERATE THEIR ASSISTIVE COMMUNICATION DEVICES.

Students who are nonverbal may use an assistive device to express information they need to communicate. The devices can be low tech paper charts, augmentative devices, PECS boards or a smartphone or tablet.



PROVIDE CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK

POSITIVE FEEDBACK.

Give frequent feedback that is positive, constructive and encouraging. Verbal feedback can be general, such as, "Good job," or more specific, such as, "Nice jumping, you bent your knees first." Use gestures that communicate positive performance such as thumbs up, pat on the back, smile, head nod, clapping, high five or fist pound. Add a picture such as a Smiley Face, "Great Job" sign or other visuals that the student recognizes, such as a favorite sports athlete or cartoon character smiling.

CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK.

Use the sandwich approach to phrase feedback. Say something positive, then the error correction, followed by something positive. For example, "That was a good beginning! Now keep your head up on the landing. I know you can do it."

NONVERBAL FEEDBACK.

Use a high five, thumbs up, clapping or smile to indicate success in skill performance or task completion.

VISUAL SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Seeing it is often better than just only saying it. Providing visual aids will go a long way in helping students understand, communicate, focus and follow directions.

Use pictures, charts, graphic organizers and visual aids. Along with verbal directions, it is helpful to support directions with a picture or drawing. Adding words to the picture supports reading and comprehension, and helps students who have auditory processing challenges. Create signs with words and pictures to show:

- Skill sequences
- Lists of rules, task or directions
- Identify equipment
- Note a class or practice activity schedule
- Identify start and stop signs
- Drill illustrations
- Tips and reminders

The Board Maker® computer program, clip art or Google Images provide clear visual pictures, or ask the Visual Arts teacher to help with illustrations or drawings. A visual schedule sets expectations about the order of the activities, the time for each activity and a space for the student to check when the activity is completed. The teacher can return to the visual schedule after each activity to review what was completed and introduce the next activity. Request help from the special education teacher and speech and occupational therapists to create visual aids, graphic organizers and picture systems. Enhance documents such as activity and check sheets, schedules, instructions and evaluations with imagery and photos.



USE TECHNOLOGY.

iPods®, iPads®, Kinect® for Xbox One® games and Wii U® programs are a great way to help motivate and improve student learning. They can be used for warm-ups, balance and coordination activities or a range of different movements and sport skill development. Sports video games offer a fun and familiar way to introduce new sports and skills, practice specific movements and offer a break from structure and an option for a rainy day.

USE COMMUNICATION CUES AND HAND AND FACIAL GESTURES.

Support positive feedback with a high five, thumbs up, clap and a smile. Add a picture of a smiley face, a word “Yes” or “Great job” or a thumbs up. For inappropriate behaviors show a thumbs down or frowning face. Learn and use basic sign language to support verbal communication.

DEMONSTRATE OFTEN.

Show students how to perform the activity as you explain it. Repeat demonstrations often. Students will need the repetition. Make sure students can see the demonstrator clearly. It may be necessary to stand directly in front of the student (with back to the student) or to the side so he can match the demonstrator’s body movements. If you are facing the student, it’s best to mirror the action (demonstrator’s left hand mirrored by the student’s right hand). Sometimes exaggerating the movement can emphasize the action.

CLARIFY BOUNDARIES.

Mark positions clearly. Use different color lines, cones or flags to help clarify court or field space. Show students the boundaries. They can walk the perimeter of the space to gain a clear understanding of how the boundary limits the game play or position.

USE COLORS, SHAPES, MARKERS AND DIRECTIONAL SIGNALS.

Colored tape, poly spots, chalk marks or small cones in various colors can be used to identify specific positions, lanes, start and stop points and boundaries. For example, a red pinnie on the goal for the red team. Different/ brightly colored equipment helps to identify and organize a team’s position in the space.

VIDEO MODELING.

Create a short video on an iPad® that demonstrates the skill, game concept or a specific defensive or offensive strategy. The student can view the video repeatedly and take it home to gain an understanding of the skill or concept. Also, videotape students performing skills and show it to them while offering positive corrective feedback. Select videos from YouTube that show skills and game play. Project the video on the wall or screen from a computer to watch and review together.



Use gesturing to enhance verbal communication.

Learn and incorporate basic sign language.



KINESTHETIC STRATEGIES

These strategies recognize that movement, touching and physically interacting with the equipment is a valuable way to learn.

KEEP IT MOVING.

Plan activities where students spend minimal time waiting for a turn. When lines have three or fewer students, there is increased focus and more repetitions that lead to skill development. When class sizes are large, use peer partners to help with small groups.

USE TACTICAL PROMPTS.

When appropriate, use a light touch on a body part to indicate what body part moves. For example, a light touch on the left foot and right hand can help with opposition in an overhand throw.

OFFER HAND-OVER-HAND ASSISTANCE.

In this strategy the teacher or trained paraeducator helps the student learn the motion of a skill by moving the student's body or body part through the entire range of motion repeatedly until the student can feel how her body should move to perform the skill. This strategy is appropriate only for the teacher or trained paraeducator who understands the student's ability to move a body part, specifically if the student has a limited range of motion.

ALLOW TIME TO TOUCH AND FEEL EQUIPMENT.

Before an activity or drill be sure students are comfortable with equipment. Allow time to touch different textured equipment.

ASSIGN CLASS JOBS.

Have students take turns obtaining and putting away equipment, leading warm-ups or being a demonstrator.

WALK AND TALK.

In addition to talking and pointing out game play boundaries, also have students walk on or through the boundaries.



PARAEDUCATORS

Paraeducators can be a valuable support in your class. In some schools they are identified as teacher assistants, aides or paraprofessionals. They are assigned to a student (or group of students) for classroom support according to the student's IEP and should also accompany the student to physical education.

Clarify the expectations for the paraeducator as a support during gross motor instruction and play, as well as in the physical education class. Do you want directions reinforced, skills reviewed and/or assistance with hand over hand guidance to move the student through the skill? Do you want them to provide affirmative feedback and support positive behavior? Let them know how their participation will help the students to learn and be accepted.

In an inclusive class the student and the paraeducator are equally part of all activities and should not be working alone on the side or doing an unrelated activity.

Remember, the teacher is responsible for planning, identifying and implementing modifications, and then communicating the modifications to the paraeducator.

Paraeducators can:

- Model and reinforce skills
- Repeat directions
- Help with obtaining and returning equipment
- Help with assessments
- Advise on and manage inappropriate behaviors
- Help the student transition between activities
- Provide feedback to correct or affirm an activity
- Provide support for social interactions with all students in the class



Example of Task Card

Student Name: John Doe

Skill: Step or jump over hurdle

Objective: Help John attempt to step or jump over a hurdle on the floor. Can use light touch on elbow to guide him. Use floor markers for target.

Cue Words: Bend knees, jump with two feet

Feedback: "Great job" and high fives



MOVING BEYOND 30 MINUTES OF GROSS MOTOR EDUCATION AND PLAY

Lesson planning and scheduling multiple academic content areas into a daily routine requires time and effort. As required, preschool classes have a set time for gross motor play every day. A balance of structured and unstructured gross motor time is recommended so that all students have access to the range of benefits that come from quality Inclusive Gross Motor Education and play.

While a scheduled gross motor or recess time is beneficial, the equipment included in the Young Athletes Classroom Kit is versatile and can be used throughout the day, and across the curriculum. The teachable moments that arise while learning and practicing skills can occur in multiple contexts in a child's natural environment.

Below are suggestions to incorporate the Young Athletes equipment and concepts in contexts other than daily, structured gross motor learning time.

Classroom Spaces and Routines:

- Use balance beams or floor markers to designate paths within the classroom for transitions.
- Set out hoops for students to sit in during circle or story time to learn spatial and body awareness.
- Play the scarf game (see Foundational Skills Activities in Practice: Young Athletes) prior to a reading or writing task to encourage visual tracking.
- Have students create an "obstacle course of the day" through which all students have to pass on their way out of the classroom.
- Use floor markers to designate spots for students to sit on when participating in large, whole school activities such as assemblies.
- Start "Morning Meeting" or "Circle Time" with a quick parachute game.

Cross-Curricular and Thematic Links:

- Count how many times a student can step in and out of a hoop or on and off of a floor marker.
- Count how many floor markers are set out in a path and change the path daily. Record the number of floor markers on a calendar or chart.
- Play shape or color "Simon Says" with the floor markers.
- Encourage students to act and move as animals they are learning about in science units.





Part Two: Practice

"When Kailani first started Young Athletes, she could not even run. Three years later, she sprints. Her motor and physical skills have improved immensely, from running to jumping, to climbing stairs to swinging a bat, and balancing etc. When we walk into the sessions you can see her excitement. Young Athletes has been greatly beneficial to these accomplishments."

Quetcy Parrish, Mom of Young Athletes, Kailani

SPECIAL OLYMPICS NEW
JERSEY YOUNG ATHLETES™

SPECIAL OLYMPICS YOUNG ATHLETES™

Special Olympics Young Athletes™ is an inclusive sport and play program that introduces children, ages 2 through 7, with and without intellectual disabilities, to the world of sports through a developmentally appropriate progression of motor skills activities and games. While play offers an organic learning experience for young children, quality inclusive play allows children of all abilities to improve gross motor skills, generalize social skills, develop self-confidence, and integrate cross-curricular connections in a fun environment. Early childhood educators and physical education teachers have reported that preschool students who participate in Young Athletes in school show gains across all areas of development that persist over time (Favazza & Sipperstein, 2014). The games and activities presented in this section can be implemented in an early childhood physical education or physical therapy setting and integrated through thematic units of study.

Students will learn and practice skills in the following areas:

- Foundational Skills – Body Awareness, Strength & Fitness
- Walking & Running
- Balance & Jumping
- Trapping & Catching
- Throwing
- Striking
- Kicking



EACH SKILL AREA INCLUDES THESE HELPFUL TEACHER TOOLS:

Activity Suggestions: Small and whole group activities that incorporate equipment provided in the Young Athletes school equipment kit.

Teaching Tips for Success: Suggested ideas for making activities more accessible and appropriate for the student's ability.



Partner Play: Ideas for helping students play together.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Progression Charts: A three-step chart that will outline the developmental sequence of skills, giving you a gauge to measure each student's level and progression. The activities presented can be modified at all levels. The steps provide you with the knowledge base for implementing those modifications and adaptations.

*Progression charts are not provided for Young Athletes Foundational Skills, but are included for the other skills outlined in the guide.

USE THE TEACHING-LEARNING CYCLE: EVERYONE SUCCEEDS, EVERY ACCOMPLISHMENT IS CELEBRATED

When teaching is inclusive, success is measured individually and according to ability. Accomplishments are equally rewarding for the student who stays at the same level and makes continuous progress, as they are for the student who advances from basic skills to proficiency with ease. Continuous assessment allows for setting achievable goals so that all students can experience accomplishment at the level of their ability. In an Inclusive Gross Motor Education program, every accomplishment is celebrated!



1A FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Body Awareness

Awareness of one's self and one's relationship to the environment, along with basic health and physical fitness, is important for functional mobility, motor development and essential for success in playing any sport. For body awareness, activities such as scarf games with children's songs are recommended, as the scarf's movement allows for children to make many adjustments and postures, and still achieve success. The added benefit of promoting visual tracking translates to improved readiness for reading and writing.

ACTIVITIES AND GAMES PRESENTED IN THIS SECTION HELP TO PROMOTE AND DEVELOP:

Motor Skills

- Visual tracking
- Aerobic fitness
- Overall strength and stability
- Self and spatial awareness

Cognitive Skills

- Expressive and receptive language
- Body part recognition
- Abstract concepts

Social Skills

- Peer interaction

Teaching Tips for Success

- Use high energy and enthusiasm to encourage participation in all activities.
- Make note of each student's ability to remember lyrics, activities and/or body parts, and reinforce those areas in other activities.
- Children's songs can be adapted to integrate thematic and gross motor learning. Be creative about using songs with movement in all areas of your teaching.



FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS – BODY AWARENESS

INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Scarf Games

Equipment: Scarves

Description: Drop scarves and encourage students to catch them with their hands, head or feet. Verbally cue the students to look at the scarves as they fall.

Variation: Pretend that the scarf is a bird and make it fly high in the sky or a fish that is swimming in the water.



Partner Play: Have your students work in pairs and toss the scarves to one another. Each student can take turns calling out a body part with which his partner should try and catch the scarf, or a word that his partner has to rhyme when catching the scarf.

Activity: Children's Songs

Equipment: None

Description: Sing children's songs that associate words with actions to encourage language, body awareness and coordinated movement. Some examples include, "Wheels on the Bus," "Head, Shoulders, Knees & Toes," "Hokey Pokey" and "If You're Happy and You Know It."

Variation: Piggyback songs are a great way to create your own lyrics to tunes of children's songs that are familiar to you and your students. There are many websites that offer piggyback song lyrics. Try incorporating "sports terminology" within the lyrics to introduce sports terms.

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS – BODY AWARENESS

WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Circle Time Scarves

Equipment: Scarves

Description: Have students pass scarves back and forth to one another during circle time. Simple directions can include “Pass the scarf to the person next to you,” and “Pass the scarf to the person on your right.” Complex directions can include, “Pass the scarf as we count to five,” and “If you have a green scarf, place it on the foot of the person to your left.”

Activity: Toe to Toe

Equipment: None

Description: Have the students sit in pairs on the floor facing one another. Call out two body parts such as “toe to toe,” “back to back,” “elbow to elbow,” etc. Encourage the students to match their body parts so that their toes, backs, elbows, etc. are touching. Progress to unmatched parts such as “hand to head.”



Activity: Obstacle Course

Equipment: Cones, floor markers, hoops, plastic bricks, balance beam, plastic poles

Description: An obstacle course can be designed to work on a specific skill using different kinds of equipment. Have students step over or go under hurdles, step on and off balance beams or incorporate themes of study. Teach various skills and concepts such as “over,” “under,” “in,” “out,” “around,” “between,” “on,” “off” and “balance.” Signs with directional arrows can be used to reinforce directional terms in an obstacle course.

Variation: Add letters and numbers to promote phonemic awareness and numerical concepts. Repeating the activity to fun music can help children work on rhythm and aerobic fitness.



Partner Play: Set up two obstacle courses and form relay teams. Encourage students to cheer each other on.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Musical Markers

Equipment: Hoops, floor markers

Description: While music is playing, ask students to run, walk backward, crawl, twist, etc. Encourage students to move to the beat of the music and/or change their movements with the changes to the tempo. When the music stops, the students have to find a marker on which to stand on or a hoop in which to stand in. Slowly eliminate the markers or hoops until there is only one large hoop or two markers for the students to share.

Variation: Have the students touch the markers with different body parts.



1B FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Strength & Fitness

Strength and stability through the torso, arms and legs build a good foundation for balance activities and sports. They are integral for functional movement, such as moving from a sitting to standing position, or sitting up in a chair. Strength is directly related to achieving and maintaining good posture, which is important for reading and writing readiness.

ACTIVITIES AND GAMES PRESENTED IN THIS SECTION HELP TO PROMOTE AND DEVELOP:

Motor Skills

- Overall strength and stability through the trunk, arms and legs

Cognitive Skills

- Color recognition
- Body part identification
- Receptive and expressive language
- Cognitive concepts such as in/out, over/under and through

Social Skills

- Participation in activities with others

Teaching Tips for Success

- Make note of approximately how many times or how long the student can perform each activity.
- Encourage more repetition or longer duration over several weeks to develop muscular strength and endurance.
- Have fun counting or reciting the alphabet while you play.
- Add music to create a fun environment or change pace.
- Use picture cue cards to provide visual cues.
- Demonstrate the activity while saying the words.



FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS – STRENGTH & FITNESS

INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Tunnel Crawl

Equipment: Tunnel, cones or plastic bricks with plastic poles

Description: Have students crawl through tunnels or under a series of obstacles such as foam pool noodles or plastic bars supported by plastic bricks or cones.



Partner play: For the Tunnel Crawl, create relay teams and encourage students to cheer for one another.

Activity: Animal Exercises

Equipment: None

Description: Children love to pretend that they are animals and move their bodies in different ways. Be imaginative with these exercises to encourage movement and expression. Picture books or images from the computer can help students visualize the animal and movement.

- **Inchworm Wiggle:** Have students bend forward so that hands and feet are on the ground. Think of the position as an upside-down V. Encourage them to move like an inchworm by walking their hands forward and then working their feet up to their hands.
- **Bunny Hop:** Have students bend forward so that hands and feet are on the ground. Encourage them to hop like a bunny by moving their hands forward and then hopping their feet up to their hands.
- **Bear Crawl:** Have students bend down with their hands and feet on the ground. Encourage them to crawl/walk like a bear. Make sure the knees do not touch the floor. Growl for fun!
- **Crab Walk:** Have students sit on the floor with feet flat on the floor, knees bent and hands flat on the floor, slightly behind the body. Ask them to lift their hips off the floor and walk their hands and feet backward. Once that is mastered, ask them to crawl sideways or forward in the same position.



Partner Play: Encourage students to work together as animals on a farm, park, zoo or other natural habitat.



FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS – STRENGTH & FITNESS

WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Parachute Games

Equipment: Parachute, ball, bean bags

Description: Parachute games are extremely popular with young children and very versatile, as you can incorporate a variety of cross-curricular skills and concepts and reinforce teamwork. An example of a parachute game is to first have the students throw beanbags onto the parachute, then raise and lower the parachute making sure the beanbags stay on. Continue shaking the parachute to toss off all the beanbags. Have the students run under the parachute by responding to cues like, “All those wearing blue shirts,” and “Those who have names that start with an A.” There are many books and websites that offer a wide variety of parachute games.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Yoga

Equipment: Mats (optional)

Description: Yoga offers many benefits such as flexibility, balance, strength, coordination, spatial awareness, sensory integration and self-control. Websites and DVDs that offer yoga instruction for children can be a great resource. Yoga postures associated with animals can integrate cross-curricular connections.

2 WALKING & RUNNING

Walking and running are basic locomotor skills that move a student from one place to another. Beginning walkers walk with their hands up at shoulder height (which is called high-guard) and their feet wide apart and turned out at the toes, offering them a wide base of support. As children feel more balanced and secure, they will drop their arms, narrow their base of support by bringing their feet closer together, and begin to rotate their trunk as they move.

Most children begin to run around six to seven months after they begin to walk. As with beginning walkers, beginning runners will use a high-guard and wide base until they feel more balanced and secure.

Walking and running are basic skills found in most sports and are important parts of social development as they allow for participation in recreational games and activities.

Activities and games presented in this section help to promote and develop:

Motor Skills

- Locomotion skills and cognitive concepts such as walking or running forward, backward, sideways and in pathways, such as zigzag, circle and straight lines
- Object manipulation

Cognitive Skills

- Following activity directions

Social Skills

- Peer interaction
- Confidence

Teaching Tips for Success

- Encourage students to look in the direction they are going when walking or side stepping and to keep the hips and feet facing forward.
- Encourage students not to crouch or make extra movements when walking or side stepping.
- Try placing a beanbag on the student's head to encourage good posture and balance for walking.
- Use visual cues for directional signs when doing activities such as "Running Styles" and "Follow the Leader."
- If arms are at high-guard or swinging across the body, offer the student a mid-sized ball or object to carry while walking or running.
- Listen and watch for foot slapping while running and encourage students to walk on their toes or heels for fun to reverse flat footsteps.
- If you notice students using too long or short strides, use floor markers to trace a pattern on the floor that demonstrates proper stride length that they can follow.



WALKING & RUNNING SKILL PROGRESSION STEPS

WALKING

Basic

- High-guard
- Toes point out, wide base of support
- Flat feet
- Independent steps are taken, no trunk or pelvic rotation

Proficient

- Low-guard, minimal reciprocal arm swing (opposite arm to opposite leg)
- Less toeing out, decreased base of support
- More fluid motion of legs
- Increased stride length

Advanced

- Reciprocal arm swing (opposite arm to opposite leg)
- Maximum stride length and fast speed
- Narrow base of support
- Pelvic rotation

RUNNING

Basic

- High-guard
- Short, limited leg swing
- Toeing out, wide base of support

Proficient

- Increased stride and speed
- Arm swing increases
- Less toeing out
- Swinging foot crosses midline, placed near center of gravity (less base of support)

Advanced

- Maximum stride length and fast speed
- Arms swing in opposition, elbows at 90 degrees
- Toes contact ground on landing, followed by heel



WALKING & RUNNING

INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Run and Carry

Equipment: Floor marker, three to five objects such as beanbags

Directions: Place several objects (i.e. beanbags) on the floor several feet from a floor marker. Encourage students to run, pick up an object from the pile and then run to place it on the floor marker. Repeat until all objects are on the floor marker.

Variation: Objects can be part of a thematic unit or props from a story that students need to pick up in sequence. Objects can be counted as students put them on the marker. Repeat several times to develop endurance.



Partner Play: Have two or more students take turns running to retrieve an object. Encourage students to cheer for one another or give a high five to signal the other's turn.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Side Stepping

Equipment: Floor markers, hoops

Directions: Set out a path marked by hoops, floor markers or cones and have the students side step to each object.

Variation: Place an object at the end of the path for students to pick up and then bring back to the starting point.

Activity: Run and Leap

Equipment: Plastic poles, foam pool noodle

Directions: Set out a low hurdle, foam pool noodle or plastic bar. Have students run and leap over the object(s). Verbal cues can include, "Run big," to initiate the leap.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.



WALKING & RUNNING

WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Follow the Leader

Equipment: None

Directions: Encourage students to “follow the leader” as you walk in different ways (slow, fast, march, etc.) and move different parts of your body (arms up, arms out, etc). This prepares them to start and stop moving, as needed in sports competition. Use music, blow a whistle or clap.



Partner Play: Have students take turns as the leader.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Running Styles

Equipment: Gym floor tape

Directions: Mark out a path using gym floor tape. Model different types of running (slow, fast, zigzag, etc). Decide on a command signal, such as a whistle, clap or hand signal. Each time you use the command signal, students should change their running style.



Partner Play: Have students choose and use the start and stop signal.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: A Walk in the Park

Equipment: None

Directions: Tell students to pretend they are taking a walk in the park. As they walk (inside or outside), suggest different ways to move their arms. Walk and reach up high to touch the sun. Walk and swing your arms as the wind blows. Walk and reach side to side with the right hand and then left hand to catch raindrops. Lift knees high to step over logs or branches. Take big steps to leap over brooks or creeks.



Partner Play: Have students work as partners.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Follow the Path

Equipment: Cones, floor markers, hoops, plastic bars

Directions: Set out a path marked with hoops, cones or floor markers. Encourage students to follow the path.

Variation: Place a plastic bar in the path for students to step over. Have students take turns as the leader. Vary the path from straight to zigzags or spirals.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.



3 BALANCE & JUMPING

Adequate balance is a requirement of many sports and gross motor activities. Poor balance can affect safety and mobility skills at home and at school.

Balance can affect a child's ability to:

- Get on and off the school bus
- Climb stairs
- Get in and out of a car
- Feel comfortable on playground equipment at school or a park
- Walk on grass or sand
- Walk up a curb
- Kick or throw a ball

There are many factors that can have an effect on balance including visual impairments, vestibular difficulties and low muscle tone. A child will typically have the best balance when her eyes are open, feet are wide apart, she is close to the ground and the surface she is standing on is firm, even and stable. Standing with the feet together or eyes closed will likely cause a child to sway.

Activities and games presented in this section help to promote and develop:

Motor Skills

- Stability
- Coordination
- Leg strength
- Core strength
- Jumping

Cognitive Skills

- Remember a sequence of directions

Social Skills

- Teamwork
- Peer interaction
- Taking turns
- Empathy



Teaching Tips for Success

- Avoid having students close their eyes during activities, as they can sway and lose their balance.
- To make an activity or game involving balance easier or more difficult, consider changing the support surface (sand, grass, mat, etc.) or base of support (balance beam, floor markers, etc.).
- Be patient and work on balance and jumping activities often.
- New jumpers will push off and/or land with one foot leading the other, rather than both feet pushing off and landing at the same time. It will take some time, but encourage students to jump off and land with both feet at the same time.
- Ask students to look at a still object (the teacher, a picture, stuffed animal, etc.) to help maintain balance.



BALANCE & JUMPING SKILL PROGRESSION STEPS

BALANCE

Basic

- Able to walk on a line
- Able to stand on a balance beam
- Able to stand on one foot momentarily

Proficient

- Able to stand on one foot for 10 seconds
- Able to walk across a 4 inch balance beam

Advanced

- Able to stand on one foot for 60+ seconds
- Able to balance on tiptoes with eyes closed for 10 seconds

JUMPING

Basic

- Almost no arm action
- Feet do not leave or return to the floor simultaneously
- No preparation to jumping
- No bending of hip and knees on landing

Proficient

- Arms used, but not through full range
- Two foot takeoff, loses balance on landing
- Slight crouch when preparing to jump
- Bending of hips and knees on landing

Advanced

- Arms extended backwards and upwards with deep crouch when preparing to jump
- Two foot takeoff and landing, balance maintained
- Hips and knees fully extended at takeoff
- Hips and knees bend on landing



BALANCE & JUMPING

INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Step & Jump

Equipment: Balance beam, floor markers

Directions: Have students step up onto a balance beam and then step or jump down from it. As students' abilities improve, progress to having them jump farther out onto a marker or down from higher steps or surfaces.

Activity: Jump & Grab

Equipment: Scarves, balance beam, floor markers

Directions: Hold a scarf and encourage students to jump up and grab it as they:

- Jump down off a step or balance beam
- Jump down from a step or balance beam onto a floor marker
- Jump to a floor marker a few inches away
- Jump over a rope or floor marker

Activity: Balance Beam Walk

Equipment: Balance beam

Directions: Ask students to walk forward, sideways or backwards across a balance beam.

Variation: Have students walk, stop, balance on one foot and then turn around.

Activity: Tick-Tock the Croc

Equipment: Floor markers

Directions: Set out floor markers and pretend they are rocks in a river. Ask students to pretend that there is a crocodile in the river and they need to get across by stepping on the "rocks" so that they don't fall in. Increase the difficulty by having the markers farther apart.



Partner Play: Have students hold hands or help each other across the river.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.



BALANCE & JUMPING

WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: "Coach Says" (Simon Says) Game

Equipment: Floor markers

Directions: Ask students to copy your movements and assume different positions.

Some positions that may challenge their balance might be:

- Stand on tippy-toes or heels
- Stand with one foot directly in front of the other
- Stand on one foot
- Stand with feet together and arms out
- Stand with feet wide apart
- Stand with one foot on a floor marker (can work on color or shape recognition)

Activity: Trees in the Forest/Flowers in the Garden

Equipment: Scarves, floor markers

Directions: Have students pretend to be trees or flowers by having them stand with their feet on two floor markers. Pretend to be the wind and move around the students fanning them with a scarf as they bend and sway in the breeze. Increase the difficulty by moving the floor markers closer together, having them put both their feet on one floor marker or stand on one foot.



Partner Play: Have students take turns pretending to be the breeze.

Activity: Jumping Beans

Equipment: Balance beams, plastic domes or plastic bricks, music

Directions: Set up paths of plastic domes, plastic bricks, balance beams or other low level equipment (Make sure plastic domes and bricks are secure and do not slip). While the music is playing, ask students to go through the path, stepping up and down along the way. When the music stops, students should stand on a dome, brick, beam etc. and freeze. When the music begins again, students should jump down and off the equipment and continue along the path.



4 TRAPPING & CATCHING

Trapping is when a child stops a ball with the legs or feet. Catching is when a child uses his hands to receive a ball that is thrown, bounced or rolled.

Trapping and catching require:

- Visual tracking and eye-hand coordination
(1 – Foundational Skills)
- Stability and strength
(1 – Foundational Skills, 3 – Balance & Jumping)

Trapping and catching are required in many sports, such as soccer, basketball and softball.

Activities and games presented in this section help to promote and develop:

Motor Skills

- Visual tracking
- Eye, hand and foot coordination
- Timing

Cognitive Skills

- Following directions
- Staying focused on an activity
- Remembering cues

Social Skills

- Taking turns
- Teamwork



Teaching Tips for Success

- Begin with rolling or passing the ball, rather than throwing it to the student.
- Choose a lightweight ball or a favorite color ball.
- Use a stuffed animal or ball with a sound.
- Make sure the ball is the correct size. An appropriate sized ball will be approximately the width between the child's hands.
- It is easier to trap or catch a rolled ball than a tossed ball.
- Catching or trapping slower moving objects is easier when first starting out. Bubbles, beach balls and the fly-weight ball, included in your Young Athletes kit, have longer flight times than playground balls and will often help your student achieve early success in catching.
- Ask students to bring their arms out in front with the palms up. When catching above the waist, fingers point up.
- Verbal cues include "Eyes on the ball" and "Hands ready."
- A new catcher is often only as successful as the person who is tossing.
- Velcro gloves and paddles are great to use for transitioning from two to one-handed catches.



TRAPPING & CATCHING PROGRESSION STEPS

Basic

- Palms held upwards, thumbs pointing outwards
- Arms outstretched and stiff, fingers tense
- Traps ball on body
- Avoidance reaction (doesn't want to catch the ball)
- Body movement is limited, arms remain stationary while ball is in flight

Proficient

- Palms face each other, thumbs point upwards
- Elbows flexed
- Hands and arms brought towards body
- Less avoidance reaction
- Adjusts arms and hands to flight of ball, eyes track ball

Advanced

- Eyes follow ball, hands and arms adjust to level of ball in flight
- Hands grasp ball in well-timed motion, arms "give" to absorb force of ball
- No avoidance reaction



TRAPPING & CATCHING

INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Rolling and Trapping

Equipment: Slow motion ball, small to medium-sized ball

Directions: Sit opposite the student with legs outstretched in a straddle position, so that legs are touching and a diamond shape is formed. Roll the ball back and forth to each other, catching/stopping with hands

Variation: Decrease the size of the ball or increase the speed. Kneel or side-sit.



Partner Play: Have students roll the ball to each other. Encourage them to watch the ball as it rolls.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Big Ball Catch

Equipment: Slow motion ball, small to medium-sized ball

Directions: Stand facing the student and slowly pass the ball to him. Repeat several times, moving more quickly each time. Next, have the student grab the ball from your hands. Then, tell him that the ball will be let go right before it reaches his hands. Practice this several times before actually tossing the ball.

Variation: Try a small beanbag instead of a big ball. Encourage the student to catch the beanbag with one hand.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: High Ball Catch

Equipment: Slow motion ball, small to medium sized ball

Directions: Kneel about 3 feet away from the student. Gently toss a beach ball or slow moving ball from chest level to the student and encourage him to catch the ball with fingers pointing up. Be sure to throw the ball with fingers pointing up.

Variation: Move farther away as you toss the ball. Vary between high tosses and low tosses.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.



Activity: Bounce Catch

Equipment: Slow motion ball, playground ball

Directions: Face the student and bounce a beach ball or medium to large-sized ball so that she can catch it without moving. Progress to moving farther away and using smaller balls.



Partner Play: Have students bounce the ball to each other. Encourage them to watch the ball as it bounces.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Verbal Cues for Trapping and Catching:

"Hands ready!"

"Eyes on ball!"

"Look at ball."



TRAPPING & CATCHING

WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Sit, Roll and Trap

Equipment: Slow motion ball, playground ball, beach ball

Directions: Ask the students to sit in a circle and roll a ball to each other. Cross-curricular connections can include counting, rhyming or telling the sequence of a story/lifecycle each time the ball is rolled.

Variation: Decrease the size of the ball or increase the speed. Have students kneel rather than sit.

Activity: Stand, Roll and Trap

Equipment: Slow motion ball, playground ball, beach ball

Directions: Follow the directions for “Sit, Roll and Trap,” but have students stand in a circle and trap the ball with the bottom of their feet. Model first and use a slow moving ball to allow for early success.

Activities: Bubble Catching

Equipment: Bubbles, floor markers

Directions: Have the students stand on floor markers. Blow bubbles in the direction of the students and ask them to catch the bubbles with one or two hands while remaining on the marker. Encourage them to clap or squeeze a bubble. Bubbles have slow flight characteristics which can help children achieve early success in catching rather than trapping.



Partner Play: Have students take turns blowing the bubbles.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.



5 THROWING

Throwing requires strength, flexibility, balance and coordination. Early development of grip and release begins with two-handed underhand tossing of a light weight, medium size ball. A good rule of thumb is if the ball can easily be lifted above the head with two hands, then the ball is a good size for the child. Progression then continues to two-handed overhand throwing and then one-handed throwing. Throwing is an essential component in many sports and mastering it will allow children to feel comfortable joining in recess games on the playground.

Activities and games presented in this section will help to promote and develop:

Motor Skills

- Tossing underhand and/or throwing overhand and underhand
- Flexibility
- Balance
- Coordination
- Eye-hand coordination
- Strength

Cognitive Skills

- Understanding the difference between the different types of throws
- Listening
- Following directions and cues

Social Skills

- Teamwork
- Communication
- Taking turns



Teaching Tips for Success

- Throwing and catching are closely linked, so you will often find yourself working on both at the same time.
- Beginner throwers will stand with their feet even, regardless of whether they are tossing underhand or throwing overhand.
- To advance the skill of throwing, encourage the student to have her feet hip-width apart with one foot slightly forward so that weight shifting and trunk rotation can occur. Floor markers can be used to encourage correct feet position.
- As throwing skills progress, the student's arm will move forward, bend at the elbow and then straighten when the ball is released. The wrist will also slap down as the ball is released.
- For the overhand throw, cue the student to have his elbow up and the hand near the ear to begin the throw.
- If the student is having difficulty releasing the ball, practice grasp and release with a beanbag or tennis ball, or release into a hoop or bucket.
- When the right hand is used for throwing, the left foot steps forward. When the left hand is used, the right foot steps forward.



THROWING PROGRESSION STEPS

Basic

- Ball is held in palm of hand, fingers spread to release ball
- Action is caused by bending the elbow without trunk rotation
- Trunk remains facing the target, no rotation
- Follow through is forward and downward, bending at waist
- No weight transfer, feet remain stationary

Proficient

- Arms move backwards and sideways behind head
- Trunk and shoulders rotate towards throwing side when preparing to throw
- Follow through with trunk bending and forward motion of body and arm

Advanced

- Arm swings backwards and upward in preparation, elbow fully extended to release ball
- Shift weight to back foot when preparing to throw
- Full trunk rotation
- Follow through with hips, trunk and arm



THROWING

INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Rolling

Equipment: Slow motion or playground ball

Directions: Sit on the ground with your legs stretched out to the sides in a V formation. Roll a ball back and forth with the student. Progress this activity so that you're rolling the ball from half-kneeling or standing. Verbal cues can include, "Hands ready," and, "Push the ball."

Variation: Encourage the student to roll a ball from standing position so that it passes between two cones to score a goal.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

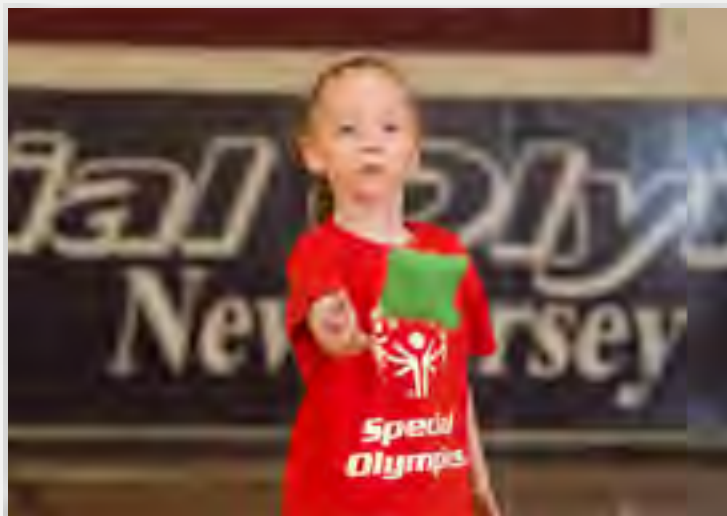
Activity: Two-Handed Underhand Throw

Equipment: Slow motion or playground ball

Directions: Encourage the student to stand with bent knees and hold a beach ball or flyweight ball with the fingers pointing down. Ask the student to look at your hands and toss the ball into your hands. Verbal cues can include, "Toss up," and, "Look at me."



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.



Activity: One-Handed Underhand Toss

Equipment: Small ball, beanbag, tennis ball, hoop

Directions: Encourage the student to stand with bent knees holding a small ball or beanbag with one hand. Ask the student to look at your hands and toss the ball or beanbag into your hands. Verbal Cues can include, "Step and toss."

Variation: Toss the ball or beanbag through a hoop or at a target. Progress to stepping with the opposite foot to the tossing hand when throwing.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Two-Handed Overhand Throwing

Equipment: Slow motion or playground ball

Directions: Have the student stand with feet hips-width apart and one foot in front of the other. While facing the direction of the throw or a target, encourage the student to rock forward and back. As she rocks to the back foot, ask her to raise her arms up over the head. When rocking forward, encourage her to bring her arms forward to throw the ball. Verbal cues can include, "Ball up," and, "Step and throw."



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: One-handed Overhand Throwing

Equipment: Small balls, beanbags

Directions: Using the same techniques as two-hand throwing, encourage the student to bring his arm back and forward and step forward with the opposite foot as the throwing arm, to throw a small ball towards your hands or a target. Verbal cues can include, "Elbow up," and, "Step and throw."



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.



THROWING

WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Target Practice

Equipment: Beanbags, small balls, tennis balls, gym floor tape or pictures/targets, floor markers

Directions: Tape targets, pictures or shapes to the wall at various heights. Using floor markers to designate the distance from the target and encourage proper foot placement, have the students stand on the markers and throw a small ball or beanbag at the targets. Verbal cues can include, "Look at the target," and, "Point to the target."

Variation: Targets or pictures can correspond to thematic lessons, shapes, colors, mathematical or reading/language concepts, or a favorite cartoon character or animal.



Activity: Bowling

Equipment: Bowling pins or stacking cups, ball, soft balance beams

Directions: Create your own bowling lane with two balance beams and stacking cups in a pyramid formation or other configuration at the end of the "lane." Have the student roll a ball towards the pins or cups.

Variation: Have the students plan a bowling "party." Set up one or two lanes, keep score and make a poster with the name of your very own bowling alley! Invite other classes to play.

Activity: Shoot to Score Basketball

Equipment: Basketball hoop or adjustable basketball stand, floor markers, basketballs of appropriate size

Directions: Set out floor markers at various distances from the basketball hoop or adjustable stand. Have students stand on the markers and throw overhand to get the ball in the hoop.

Variation: Keep score by assigning point values to attempts at the basket and actually scoring.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.



6 STRIKING

Striking is a term used to describe an action of hitting a ball or object with one's hand, stick, bat, paddle, racket, etc. Striking or even tapping a stationary ball with a fist or open hand encourages development of the skills necessary for sports such as tennis, golf, softball, volleyball and hockey.

Striking requires:

- Eye-hand coordination
(1 – Foundational Skills)
- Spatial awareness
(1 - Foundational Skills)
- Strength and flexibility
(1 - Foundational Skills)
- Balance
(2 - Balance & Jumping)

Activities and games presented in this section will help to promote and develop:

Motor Skills

- Visual tracking
- Eye-hand coordination
- Balance and stability
- Strength
- Body coordination

Cognitive Skills

- Direction following
- Remembering cues
- Remembering proper grip for holding paddle, stick, etc.

Social Skills

- Teamwork



Teaching Tips for Success

- Encourage the student to keep his eyes on the ball (visual tracking).
- Encourage the student to stand side-on to the ball with good balance. Using floor markers can help the student stand in the proper position. A side-on stance is important for good balance and rotation.
- Have the student twist his bellybutton forward when striking the ball to encourage follow through.
- Shifting weight is important to correct striking form. If the student is not shifting her weight, have her rock forward and backward while standing on floor markers.
- Large balls are easier to strike than small ones, and stationary objects are easier to strike than moving ones.
- Throw the ball slowly and with a small arc when just starting out, having the student strike a moving object.
- Increase the skill level by increasing the distance of the ball from the body. This allows the student to progress from using a hand to strike, to striking with a paddle and then to striking with a bat, golf club or hockey stick.
- If student is unable to make contact with the ball, use a suspended ball hung at different heights for practice.



STRIKING PROGRESSION STEPS

Basic

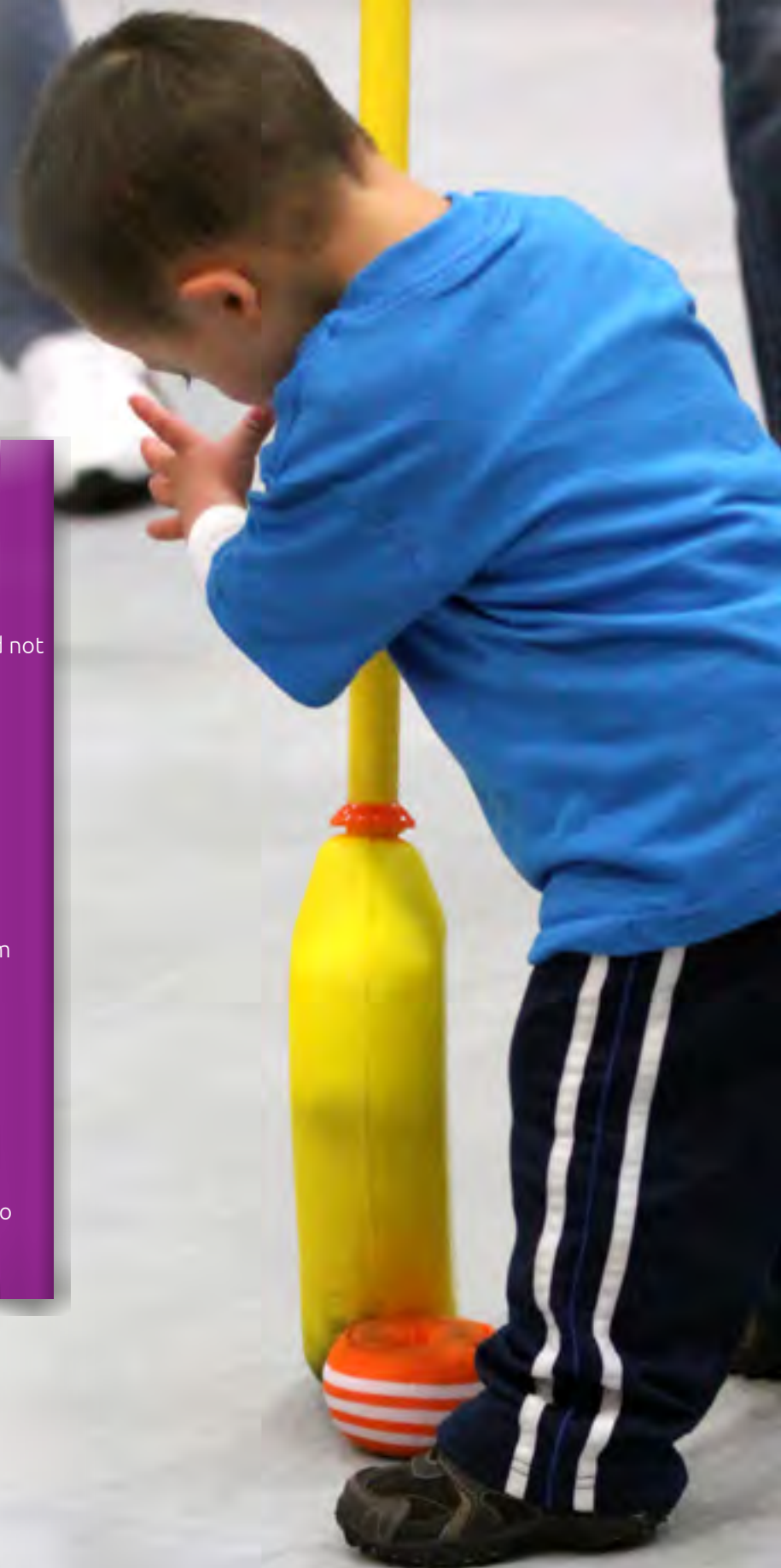
- Faces the direction of the object
- No trunk rotation
- Feet stationary
- Force is applied only from extending the arms and not from the core or from rotation

Proficient

- Some preparation by using back swing
- Trunk faces side-on in anticipation of strike
- Some trunk rotation
- Weight shifts prior to strike
- Force is applied from extending the arms and from rotation

Advanced

- Full preparation by using back swing
- Trunk faces side-on in anticipation of strike
- Rotation in hips and then torso
- Weight shifts to back foot during backswing and to forward foot at contact



STRIKING

INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Handball

Equipment: Cone/tee, flyweight, beach ball or volleyball

Directions: Place a beach ball or flyweight ball on a cone or tee. Have the student hit the ball with a fist or open hand. Verbal cues can include, "Look and hit," and, "Look at ball, hit with hand."



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Roll & Hit

Equipment: Medium-sized flyweight ball, beach ball or volleyball

Directions: Roll a medium-sized ball towards the student. Encourage the student to use his hand to hit the ball as it is rolled toward him. Verbal cues can include, "Eyes on the ball."

Variation: Vary the speed at which you roll the ball. Roll the ball so that the student has to move to the side to strike it.

Activity: Ball Tapping

Equipment: Medium sized flyweight ball, beach ball or volleyball

Directions: Tap a beach ball or flyweight ball toward the student and have her tap the ball back toward you with an open hand. Progress to having the student in a side-on or sideways ready position. Toss the ball to the student and have her hit the ball back with an open hand. Verbal cues can include, "Eyes on the ball."



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Ball Bouncing- Drop Catch

Equipment: Medium sized playground ball or basketball

Directions: Ask the student to hold the ball with two hands. Instruct him to drop the ball and catch it as it bounces back up. Verbal cues can include, "Drop and catch."



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Ball Dribble

Equipment: Medium sized playground ball or basketball

Directions: Have the student use two hands to bounce the ball. Emphasize pushing with finger tips and keeping firm wrists. Verbal cues can include, "Fingertips push."

Variations: Students can progress to bouncing (dribbling) the ball with one hand. Add walking and running while dribbling once the student is ready.



STRIKING

WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Beginning Tennis/Tee-ball

Equipment: Tee, cone, ball, paddle, racquet or bat

Directions: Place a large ball on a cone or tee. Encourage the student to face the ball with his belly button facing the ball. (This would be different if the ball were being pitched and the student would take a side-on stance to the ball instead of a front stance). Have the student hold a paddle or racket and encourage him to strike the ball with the paddle or racket. Verbal cues can include, "Eyes on ball," "Swing back and hit," and, "Swing and hit."

Variation: Toss a beach ball or flyweight ball with a slow and low arc to the student rather than using the tee or cone. Have the ball bounce prior to the student attempting to hit it.



Partner Play: Create "bases" for the children to run around after they hit the ball. Keep score for a math cross-curricular connection.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Beginning Hockey/Golf

Equipment: Medium to large-sized ball, hockey stick, plastic stick, golf club

Directions: Place a large ball on the ground. Have the student hold onto a hockey stick, long stick or golf club with two hands and strike the ball with the stick.

Variation: Set up two cones to be the goal and have the students shoot on goal. Use floor markers to assist with positioning of feet. Progress to rolling the ball towards the student to strike.



Partner Play: Have students take turns striking the ball and playing "goalie."



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Beginning Volleyball

Equipment: Beach ball, balloon, slow motion ball, volleyball floater

Directions: Using a slow high arc, toss the ball to the student. Encourage the student to use two hands to hit the ball up in the air. Verbal cues can include, "Hands up," and, "Eye on the ball."

Variation: Add a low net and begin to hit back and forth with the student.



Partner Play: Have one student throw the ball to another student to hit. Keep count on how many times each student hits the ball.



7 KICKING

Similar to striking, kicking a stationary, medium or large-sized ball is easier than kicking a small or moving ball. Unlike striking, however, kicking requires the ability to balance, at least for a moment, on one foot. Beginner kickers will lean forward when they are kicking a ball. More advanced kickers will lean their body back just before contacting the ball. Most beginners will be successful in kicking if they run up to a stationary ball to kick it, because they will essentially run through the ball with one foot.

Once your students master running and kicking, have them stand behind a stationary ball and practice kicking it. This challenges the students to stand on one foot and disassociate one leg from another. The kicking leg should bend at the knee for a back swing, then straighten at contact. The opposite arm swings forward with the kick to allow for stabilization and power. Advanced kickers will have more bend in their knee and will swing the opposite arm forward as the ball is kicked.

Activities and games presented in this section help to promote and develop:

Motor Skills

- Balance
- Eye-foot coordination
- Strength

Cognitive Skills

- Listening and following cues
- Body awareness
- Spatial planning

Social Skills

- Taking turns with others



Teaching Tips for Success

- Encourage the student to keep her eyes on the ball and then on the target. Use a ball that is the student's favorite color or a ball with a bell inside.
- Weight shifting to the non-kicking leg is necessary for control and balance.
- Use verbal and visual cues to identify and differentiate the right foot and the left foot, one as the kicking foot and one as the stabilizing foot.
- If the student loses her balance while kicking, use a lightweight ball or volleyball floater, or have the student hold your hand while kicking.



KICKING PROGRESSION STEPS

Basic

- Arms held at sides
- No preparing for kicking with kicking leg
- Pushes leg forward into the ball
- No trunk rotation

Proficient

- Some arm movement
- Steps forward with the non-kicking foot
- Minimal windup with kicking leg
- Minimal trunk rotation
- Knee bent on contact

Advanced

- Opposite arm swing
- Steps forward with non-kicking foot
- Winds up kicking leg prior to kick
- Trunk rotation
- Knee extended on contact



KICKING

INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Run and Kick

Equipment: Soccer ball, playground ball, volleyball floater

Directions: Place a ball on the ground and have the student run up to the ball and kick it toward you. Verbal cues can include, "Look at the ball," and, "Run and kick."

Variation: Encourage the student to kick for distance by having him kick past various markers.

Encourage the student to kick the ball between two cones to score a goal.



Partner Play: Have one student set up the markers for distance kicking or play "goalie" for kicking for accuracy. Students take turns switching roles.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Stationary Ball Kick

Equipment: Soccer ball, playground ball, volleyball floater

Directions: Place a ball on the ground and have the student stand behind it. Have the student kick the ball toward you with the toe of his preferred foot.

Variation: Encourage the student to kick for distance by having him kick past various markers.

Encourage the student to kick the ball between two cones to score a goal.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Passing Practice

Equipment: Soccer ball, playground ball, volleyball floater

Directions: Kick a ball toward the student and encourage her to kick the ball back to you.

Activity: Give and Go

Equipment: Soccer ball, playground ball, volleyball floater

Directions: Kick a ball toward the student and encourage him to kick the moving ball toward a goal or between two cones.

KICKING

WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITIES

Activity: Kick Ball

Equipment: Beach ball, slow motion ball, playground ball, cones, floor markers

Directions: Set out “bases” and a “home plate.” Students can either kick a stationary ball from home plate or one rolled to them. After kicking the ball, encourage each student to run around the bases.



Outdoor Play: This activity is also suitable for outdoors.

Activity: Cone Dribble

Equipment: 10 – 12 cones, soccer balls

Directions: Set up cones at random in the play space. Ask students to lightly kick the ball as they move around the space without hitting the cones. Students can take turns or you can have several students dribbling at one time. Verbal cues can include, “Light kicks,” and, “Little kicks.”

Activity: Pin Ball

Equipment: Balance beams, domes, cones or stacking cups

Directions: Use the balance beams to create a rectangular “pinball machine” frame. Place cones, domes and/or markers within the rectangle to create obstacles. Have several students stand on the balance beams. Roll a ball into the rectangle towards one of the students. Using their feet as the “flippers,” students kick the ball once it is in play. The students kick the ball to each other, having it remain moving in the rectangle. Keep score by counting how many times the ball is kicked during play. Add an extra point if an obstacle is hit.



MOVING FORWARD: FUNDAMENTAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The challenge and excitement of teaching is providing an atmosphere for all students to grow and develop at their own pace, while gaining personal confidence and having fun!

Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. resources assist educators in meeting the individual needs of students, giving them the opportunity to develop at their own pace. Special Olympics Young Athletes provides early childhood educators with activities that support the progression of gross motor skills in children ages 2 through 7. Knowing that all children develop at various rates, both volumes of **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED.** can be used in conjunction with one another to create an appropriate educational learning environment for students of all abilities.



As students practice the activities and games presented in Young Athletes, rates of progress will vary. It is likely that while some students are challenged by the activities presented in Young Athletes, others will be ready to move on to more advanced skills and games. **Learn. Practice.**

Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Physical Education and Sports Activities provides activities and games that promote fundamental and specific sport skills so that all students can fully participate in recreational games, Inclusive Physical Education and Special Olympics Unified Sports®.

Teaching Complementary Skills

Young Athletes, included in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Play** and Fundamental Skill Development, included in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Physical Education and Sports Activities**, provide instruction for locomotor, balance and object manipulation skills. Select activities from each guide that meet the needs and abilities of the students, and align with education goals and curriculum standards.

High Expectations and Slow Pace!

The Fundamental Skill Development games and activities presented in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Physical Education and Sports Activities** require an integration of cognitive skills such as teamwork, learning rules, following multi-step directions and integrating strength and coordination. As students are challenged to reach new goals, regression in skills is common. Observe which components of the skill are well developed and which ones require more time, practice and guidance, and then return to the basics in Young Athletes to reintroduce skills that are developmentally appropriate for your students.

Assess Equipment Needs

As students progress, there may be a need for more developmentally or age appropriate equipment. Special Olympics New Jersey **Play UNIFIED School Partnership Program** offers stipends for adaptive equipment based on your level of partnership. Contact Special Olympics New Jersey if adaptive equipment or training is needed.



Part Three:

Play. UNIFIED.



Celebrating the Success of
Young Athletes in School!



UNIFIED GAME DAY

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

As they learn and practice new skills, students will gain confidence and pride in their accomplishments. **Unified Game Days** offer students of all interests and abilities “an opportunity to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills and friendship” in an environment of fun and celebration. **Unified Game Days** provide students with a platform to demonstrate and celebrate the skills they have learned and practiced, and give the entire school community and families the opportunity to share in the joy of what students CAN do.



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FIELD DAY AND A UNIFIED GAME DAY?

A school-wide field day is not a Unified Game Day. A Unified Game Day builds off of the skills students have been practicing in early childhood classrooms and Inclusive Physical Education as a culminating event to demonstrate skills learned and celebrate the friendships made in class. Unlike a traditional field day, in which special needs students can be isolated from their peers and travel through stations in a segregated group, a **Unified Game Day** integrates all students. Every activity is inclusive and accessible to all. Students without disabilities play alongside

students with disabilities as teammates and classmates, rather than mentors or tutors. A UGD is a key component in creating social inclusion opportunities through Special Olympics Unified Sports® and physical activity.

Unified Game Days are skill demonstration “game days” that can include a variety of physical activity and fun fitness stations designed to bring young people together to:

- Apply all they have learned during Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Inclusive Physical Education.
- Have a fun day of physical activity while making friends.

Unified Game Days are a great way to bring together an entire class, school, groups of schools and communities to celebrate the accomplishments of all students. They are designed to be:

- Festive and celebratory
- Inclusive and accessible, with modified and adapted activities interwoven to benefit all students

In addition to the Activity Planning Guides (Young Athletes UGD, Little Feet Meet) included in **Learn. Practice. Play.**

UNIFIED. Special Olympics New Jersey can provide some basic items to assist in the execution of a school’s UGD such as:

1. Special Olympics New Jersey participation ribbons or wristbands, based on the grade level and type of event.
2. Event specific equipment, such as adhesive race bibs for track events or pinnies for 3-on-3 tournaments.

Contact Special Olympics New Jersey to find out if your school is eligible to receive these additional resources.

You should feel comfortable deviating from the planning guides provided, but remember that a UGD should focus on the skills from **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED.** that students are learning and practicing in early childhood classrooms or Inclusive Physical Education classes. An emphasis should always be placed on social inclusion.



SPECIAL SERVICES SCHOOL DISTRICTS:

Special Services School Districts can still plan a Special Olympics **Unified Game Day**. Use the template provided and contact Special Olympics New Jersey for recommendations of schools with peer partners.

Special Olympics Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) activities are also an option for districts with students with varying abilities. Please contact Special Olympics New Jersey to find out more information about our MATP School Activity Guide.



UNIFIED GAME DAY PRE-GAME

WHO

Participants:

- ☐ Grade level
- ☐ Inclusive PE class
- ☐ Whole school
- ☐ Other schools

Volunteers:

- ☐ Teachers
- ☐ Paraeducators
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Middle or high school partners club

Spectators:

- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Administrators
- ☐ Community leaders
- ☐ Media

WHAT

Theme, structure and activities

- ☐ Stations can represent each skill presented in Young Athletes and/or **Learn. Practice. Play.**

UNIFIED: Practice

- ☐ Coordinate with seasonal sports, and host a fall, winter, spring or summer UGD featuring sports or skills associated with each season
- ☐ Host a **"Little Feet Meet"** (Track & Field)
- ☐ Plan a tournament with modified game play (ie. 3-on-3 basketball)
- ☐ Equipment Check: make sure you have signs, water, clear directions, and start and stop signals for station rotation or game play

WHEN & WHERE

Date and location

- ☐ Plan for inclement weather – rain date or indoors
- ☐ Clear use of space with school administration
- ☐ If outdoors, plan for temperature extremes: hats, gloves, scarves for cold weather, and shaded areas and water for warm weather

Photo Releases:

- ☐ Will pictures be taken? Is permission needed?
- ☐ Will the event be shared on social media?
- ☐ Contact Special Olympics New Jersey for approved logo

Once the event is scheduled, please notify Special Olympics New Jersey of the date and details so that support materials can be provided if necessary.

UNIFIED GAME DAY EVENT PLANNER

District: _____ School: _____

Address: _____

Coordinator: _____ Email: _____

Type of Event: _____

Date of Event: _____

Rain Date: _____

Location: _____

Number of Students: _____

Grade Level (s): _____

Other Schools: _____

Equipment Needed: _____

Volunteers Needed: _____

Invited Families ☐

Notified administrators ☐

Notified district ☐

Notified local press ☐

Plans to post on social media ☐

Notified Special Olympics ☐



YOUNG ATHLETES UNIFIED GAME DAY ACTIVITY PLANNING GUIDE:

Hosting a *Young Athletes Unified Game Day* is reason for celebration! Invite parents and community members to share in the achievements of young athletes in an inclusive setting. This event can be held in the gym, multipurpose room or playground. Enlist the help of middle school or high school volunteers as well. **Be sure to provide ample practice time during Inclusive Gross Motor Education or Inclusive Physical Education to ensure success on Game Day!**

Opening Ceremony (approximately 5-10 minutes):

- Students parade into play or game area
- If multiple classes are participating, each class can design its own t-shirt or banner to hold when marching in
- Play ceremonial or Olympics music
- Pledge of Allegiance, opening remarks, review rules and expectations for students and spectators

Athlete Oath (optional):

Special Olympics athletes always begin events by reciting the Athlete Oath that was introduced by Eunice Kennedy Shriver at the first Special Olympics Games in 1968. Have students recite the oath in sections, repeating after you say it:

**“Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me
be brave in the attempt.”**

Skill Stations (approximately 50 minutes):

- Set up 5 skill stations around play or game area
- Each class/group rotates after 10 minutes
- Allow time for transition between stations

Customize stations to students' abilities, and coordinate with the skills and activities included in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED.** Add competitive elements or modified game play if appropriate. See the following page for examples of skill stations.

Closing Ceremony:

- Closing remarks from administrator
- Students are presented with participation ribbons individually or by class
- March out of play area to music

Picture Station (Optional):

- Set up a backdrop for team or individual photos
- Include props/equipment from Young Athletes
- Students can create their own frames for their photo

Equipment Needs:

- Items provided in the Young Athletes Classroom equipment kit should be used at the skill stations
- Water coolers/cups dispersed through play/game area
- Signs
- PA system



LEARN. PRACTICE. PLAY. UNIFIED.

YOUNG ATHLETES UNIFIED GAME DAY ACTIVITY STATION IDEAS

Refer to the Young Athletes skills and activities presented in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED.** for modifications or alternate activities.

Station One: Kicking

Soccer Skills: Set up cones or soccer nets. Students kick soccer balls into the nets or between the cones. Use a soccer trainer or a volleyball floater for modifications or adaptations.

Partner Pass: Have students pass the soccer ball to each other or dribble the ball to one another.

Station Two: Obstacle Course

Obstacle Course: Set out an obstacle course using tunnels, cones, floor markers, hurdles and balls. Use sidewalk chalk or gym floor tape to create direction signs or positive messages along the way.

Station Three: Catching & Trapping

Bubble Catch: Have students stand in a circle on floor markers. A student or adult volunteer stands in the middle and blows bubbles towards the students. Students try to catch the bubbles with one or two hands while staying on their markers.

Roll, Throw, Catch: Students sit in a circle and roll or throw the ball to each other based on the teacher's commands. Students are encouraged to catch the ball or trap it.

Station Four: Balancing & Jumping

Balance Beam Walk: Set out balance beams, either in a long row or zigzag configuration. Guide athletes to walk along the beams.

Hurdles: Using bricks and bars, create a series of hurdles for the athletes to jump over.

Coach Says: (see page 56 in Young Athletes activities in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Play**)

Station Five: Walking & Running

Water Balloon Relay (if outdoors):

Athletes are divided into two teams. At the starting line of each team there is a bucket of water balloons. At the finish there is either a bucket or hoop. The objective is for each member of the team to get his water balloon from the start of the race line to the hoop or bucket at the finish without breaking it. If the student drops the balloon, he needs to start over. The team that finishes first wins.

*If needed the athletes can work in pairs. You can make the race more difficult by adding obstacles, like hurdles.



LITTLE FEET MEET ACTIVITY PLANNING GUIDE 1

PRE-K OR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EVENT

Whether on a track, blacktop or in a gymnasium, a **Little Feet Meet** offers a chance to experience the joy of competing and succeeding. A track and field meet can include a variety of events and is a great way to have students train and compete together. **The plans here include ideas for several activities, but do not feel the need to include all of them in the Little Feet Meet.** Invite parents, administrators and community members to celebrate the success of the students in an inclusive setting. Enlist the help of middle and high school students to help run the event. **Be sure to provide ample time during Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Inclusive Physical Education to ensure success on the day of the meet!**

Opening Ceremony (approximately 5-10 minutes):

- Athletes parade onto track area
- If multiple classes are participating, each class can design its own t-shirt or banner to hold when marching in
- Play ceremonial or Olympic music
- Pledge of Allegiance, opening remarks, review rules and expectations for athletes and spectators

Athlete Oath (optional):

Special Olympics athletes always begin events by reciting the Athlete Oath that was introduced by Eunice Kennedy Shriver at the first Special Olympics Games in 1968. Have students recite the oath in sections, repeating after you say it:

“Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

Events (Approximately 60 minutes):

- 25-meter Run/Walk or 25-meter Wheelchair event
- 50-meter Run/Walk
- 100-meter relay (team event)
- 25-meter Hurdles (Young Athletes Equipment)
- Tennis/Softball throw
- Standing long jump
- Mini jav

Customize events to the students’ abilities and coordinate with the skills and activities included in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED.** See the following pages for examples of events.

Closing Ceremony (Approximately 5-10 minutes):

- Closing Remarks
- Students are presented with participation ribbons individually or by class
- March out of track area to music

Optional Activities:

Champion Photo Station: Set up a backdrop for team or individual photos. Students can create their own frames for their photos in their classroom.

School-wide Acceptance or Respect Week: The **Little Feet Meet** can be the celebration at the beginning or ending of a school’s Respect Week activities or Disabilities Awareness Week.

Equipment Needs:

Depending upon the events chosen, the following items may be needed:

- tape measure
- tennis balls, softballs, foam reaction balls or beanbags
- long jump mats
- batons or rings for relay
- stop watch
- clip boards
- “Student Success Cards” (template provided at the end of this section): Each student should receive a “Student Success Card” and travel with it to the various events. For run and walk events, relays or hurdles, the student will be awarded a star sticker for completing each event. For events such as the tennis ball throw, mini jav or standing long jump, students can receive a “score” for the distance they threw or jumped.
- Special Olympics New Jersey can provide additional equipment such as adhesive race bibs, ribbons or wristbands for eligible schools.

Securing Volunteers:

Teachers and paraeducators will work with the students to make sure they get to the various events. Some may be able to run an event, but it is likely that additional volunteers will need to be recruited.

LITTLE FEET MEET TRACK EVENTS OVERVIEW

- 25-meter Run/Walk or 25-meter Wheelchair event
- 50-meter Run/Walk
- 100-meter relay (team event)
- 25-meter Hurdles (Young Athletes equipment)

Activity Directions and Helpful Hints:

- The starter gives the commands to start each race.
- The commands for the starter are: “On your marks,” “Set,” and when all students are ready, the starter blows the whistle or says, “Go.” **Make sure this is practiced in class first.**
- If using a track, designate the starting and finish lines. Volunteers may use green “Start” signs and red “Finish” signs as a visual cue for athletes.
- Use a tape measure and tape to mark out lanes if using a black top or gym.
- Poly spots can also be used to designate starting positions.
- Young Athletes steeple bricks and long poles can be used to create hurdles. Poly spots can be used to designate targets for stepping or jumping over hurdles.

Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Stage and line up the students in the proper lane. Collect the “Student Success Cards”.
- Model running at start signal and stopping at finish line.
- Starter gives the commands to start each race.
- Place sticker, or draw star on the “Student Success Card” for each student.



LITTLE FEET MEET FIELD EVENTS OVERVIEW

- Tennis/Softball Throw
- Standing Long Jump
- Mini Jav

Softball/Tennis Ball Throw:

Activity Directions and Helpful Hints:

- Refer to the Track & Field section in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Physical Education and Sports Activities: Practice**
- Students can use a tennis ball, softball, foam reaction ball or beanbag.
- Students can throw overhand or underhand, but overhand is preferred.
- Using tape or chalk, create a throw line which all students will stand behind.
- Use floor markers to designate a place for each student to stand.
- Have a tape measure available to measure the distance once object is thrown.
- A hoop can be used as target for foot placement to encourage shifting of weight.

Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Model throwing the ball from behind the line with emphasis on shifting weight and bending elbow.
- Collect the “Student Success Cards” and call the name of each student when it is his turn to throw.
- Measure and record the best distance.

Standing Long Jump:

Activity Directions and Helpful Hints:

- Refer to the Track & Field section in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Physical Education and Sports Activities: Practice**
- Use tape or chalk to create a takeoff line OR use a long jump mat.
- Use floor markers to designate where students place their feet.

Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Model jumping with emphasis on bending knees and using arms.
- Collect the “Student Success Cards” from students and call the name of each student when it is her turn to jump.
- Record the best of two jumps.

Mini Jav:

Activity Directions and Helpful Hints:

- Refer to the Track & Field section in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Physical Education and Sports Activities: Practice**
- Use floor markers to designate a place for each student to stand.
- A hoop can be used as target for foot placement to encourage shifting of weight.

Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Model throwing the mini jav.
- Collect the Student Success Cards from students and call the name of each student when it is his turn to throw.
- Record the best of two throws.



LITTLE FEET MEET 2 ACTIVITY PLANNING GUIDE

PARTNERING WITH A PLAY UNIFIED HIGH SCHOOL

At a Little Feet Meet, inclusive preschool classes or inclusive elementary school classes can come together at a local high school and experience the excitement of a track meet!

There are two parts to creating a Little Feet Meet at a host high school that must happen simultaneously:

1. The participating pre K or elementary school(s) needs to be practicing skills in Inclusive Gross Motor Education or Inclusive Physical Education class as part of the Special Olympics New Jersey Play Unified School Partnership.
2. The high school must also be a Special Olympics New Jersey Play Unified School Partner, involved in inclusive sports, and agree to host and run the event.
3. The high school students are trained prior to the event.

Planning and Implementation Timeline:

1. District selects a point person at each participating elementary school and high school. These staff members will then coordinate with each other and Special Olympics New Jersey staff.
2. Select a date (and rain date) and secure transportation and funding well in advance.
3. Schedule Inclusive Physical Education in-service trainings and peer partner trainings for faculty and students.
4. Physical Education teachers incorporate training into Inclusive Physical Education while high school leaders plan the event.
5. Schedule a meeting at least six weeks out with Special Olympics staff (first time schools), school point person and high school leadership. Discuss responsibilities of Little Feet Meet host (checklist included on following page).
6. Pre K or elementary school(s) sends home permission slips and provides Special Olympics New Jersey with needs for ribbons.
7. Once the date arrives, celebrate the accomplishments of the students!



Equipment Needs:

Depending upon the events chosen, the following items may be needed:

- tape measure
- tennis balls, softballs, foam reaction balls or beanbags
- long jump mats
- batons or rings for relay
- stop watch
- clip boards
- Student Success Cards (template provided at the end of this section): Each student should receive a Student Success Card and travel with it to the various events. For run and walk events, and relays or hurdles, the student will be awarded a star sticker for completing each event. For events such as the tennis ball throw, mini jav or standing long jump, students can receive a "score" for the distance they threw or jumped.
- Special Olympics New Jersey can provide additional equipment such as adhesive race bibs, ribbons or wristbands for eligible schools.



LITTLE FEET MEET HOST SCHOOL CHECKLIST

- 1. Select high school faculty point person to work with the Play Unified Youth Leadership Club for assistance and guidance in planning.**
- 2. Consider the logistics of your location:**
 - Where will the buses load and unload students?
 - Where are the bathrooms?
 - What staff will be needed to assist?
 - Will we want to engage other school clubs (photography, additional volunteers)?
- 3. Have high school faculty point person meet with the Play Unified Youth Leadership Club to plan event and outline needs:**
 - Who will recruit volunteers?
 - Who plans and conducts the Opening Ceremony?
 - Who is in charge of school equipment needs (tables, chairs, trash bins, water coolers, cups, signs directing students to track or restrooms)?
 - Who plans and conducts Awards Ceremony?
 - Who plans and runs the event stations?
 - Will community leaders or local press be invited?
- 4. Faculty point person, student leaders and Special Olympics New Jersey staff meet to finalize plan, order ribbons and secure athletic equipment.**
- 5. Update school and district administrators during planning and prior to event.**
- 6. After event, debrief and make notes for next year's event.**

LITTLE FEET MEET EVENT OVERVIEW

Track Events

- 25-meter Run/Walk or 25-meter Wheelchair event
- 50-meter Run/Walk
- 100-meter relay (team event)
- 25-meter Hurdles (Young Athletes Equipment)

Field Events

- Tennis/Softball throw
- Standing Long Jump
- Mini Jav

Refer to Little Feet Meet Individual School Event on previous pages for directions.

- The host school is not obligated to provide lunch, but should provide water.
- Parents are welcome to attend the Little Feet Meet.
- Have the high school track team help train the athletes or lead them in a warm up.



LITTLE FEET MEET STUDENT SUCCESS CARD

Name: _____

Field Events:

Standing Long Jump: _____

Tennis/Softball Throw: _____

Mini Jav: _____

Track Events

(circle when complete)

25M or 50M Run/Walk

Hurdles

LITTLE FEET MEET STUDENT SUCCESS CARD

Name: _____

Field Events:

Standing Long Jump: _____

Tennis/Softball Throw: _____

Mini Jav: _____

Track Events

(circle when complete)

25M or 50M Run/Walk

Hurdles

LITTLE FEET MEET STUDENT SUCCESS CARD

Name: _____

Field Events:

Standing Long Jump: _____

Tennis/Softball Throw: _____

Mini Jav: _____

Track Events

(circle when complete)

25M or 50M Run/Walk

Hurdles

LITTLE FEET MEET STUDENT SUCCESS CARD

Name: _____

Field Events:

Standing Long Jump: _____

Tennis/Softball Throw: _____

Mini Jav: _____

Track Events

(circle when complete)

25M or 50M Run/Walk

Hurdles



UNIFIED YOUNG ATHLETES IN THE COMMUNITY

Community based Unified Young Athletes programs are 45 minute guided play sessions led by a trained volunteer Young Athletes coach. Young athletes, unified partners, siblings and family members play together, using the skills in Young Athletes to prepare them for future participation in sports.

Young Athletes and Young Athletes Sport Community Programs:

- Offer families the opportunity to share in the success of their future athlete.
- Provide an experience that will lead to an appreciation of fitness and sport for the whole family.
- Are inclusive programs that promote social development.
- Enable families to learn about the potential of their child through sport.



Special Olympics New Jersey offers community programs throughout the state. Check the SONJ website at www.sonj.org to find locations so that you can share the information with your students' families. You may also consider hosting a community Young Athletes program at your school or partner with a local Recreation Center, YMCA or Youth Sports Organization.

Traditional Young Athletes

- Ages 2 – 7 (2 – 5 option)
- Skills follow the guide (see additional template)
- Parents must participate
- All athletes are registered as Special Olympics New Jersey Young Athletes and receive a free kit of equipment with the activity guide at home

Young Athletes Sport

- Ages 5 - 7
- Skills previously learned in Young Athletes in a sport specific content
- Resources and equipment provided
- Introducing sports seasonally (Fall: soccer or golf, winter: basketball or floor hockey, spring/summer: tennis, softball or track & field)
- Connecting parents and Special Olympics local Area Directors to form new Local Training Programs
- All athletes are registered young athletes or have a completed and signed Special Olympics New Jersey medical form on file



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



PLAY UNIFIED. LIVE UNIFIED.

Special Olympics implements a collaboration strategy with schools and communities to engage young people with and without intellectual disabilities, bringing them together to become leaders for inclusion. Through a combination of youth leadership, Special Olympics Unified Sports® or inclusive sports, and whole school engagement, the strategy breaks down barriers creating more welcome school environments through social inclusion.

Project UNIFY, a collaboration between Special Olympics and the United States Department of Education was launched in 2008 and has been the genesis of this Play Unified. Live Unified. Movement. This strategic grant program includes schools in 45 states, including New Jersey. Since 2008, the Center for Social Development and Education (CSDE) at the University of Massachusetts Boston has carried out an extensive evaluation of Special Olympics Project UNIFY®. Below are responses from students involved (including Unified Sports activities and Inclusive Physical Education) from the Project UNIFY Year 6 Final Evaluation Report 2013 – 2014.

General response: students have opportunities to develop skills in a wide range of areas, and feel they are impacted on a personal level by their involvement in the program.

The students polled reported:

- 89% - learned about helping others
- 81% - changed their school for the better
- 87% - standing up for something they believed was right
- 81% - afforded the opportunity to develop leadership skills and learned about the challenges of being a leader
- 84% - became better at sharing responsibility

Three quarters of students (76%) reported that participation in Special Olympics Project UNIFY® had an impact on their plans for the future. In fact, students generally (84%) regarded Project UNIFY as a positive turning point in their lives.

(Jacobs, Martin, Albert, Summerill, & Siperstein, n.d.)



Suggested Book List for Young Children

**Special
Olympics**
New Jersey



- Andy and His Yellow Frisbee (Woodbine House Special-Needs Collection) By: Thompson, Mary
- Bully Beans By: Julia Cook
- Don't Call Me Special: A First Look at Disability By: Thomas, Pat
- Everyone Matters: A First Look at Respect for Others By: Thomas, Pat
- Giraffes Can't Dance By: Andreae, Giles
- Ian's Walk: A Story About Autism By: Laurie Lears
- My Brother Charlie By: Robinson Peete, Holly
- My Friend Isabelle By Eliza Woloson
- Rolling Along: The Story of Taylor and His Wheelchair (Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago Learning Books) By: Heelan, Jamme Riggio
- Some Kids Use Wheelchairs (Understanding Differences) By: Schaefer, Lola M.
- Susan Laughs By: Willis, Jeanne
- Taking Down Syndrome to School (Special Kids in School) By: Glatzer, Jenna
- Teamwork Isn't My Thing and I Don't Like to Share! By: Julia Cook
- Tease Monster: A Book About Teasing vs. Bullying By: Julia Cook
- The Autism Acceptance Book: Being a Friend to Someone With Autism By: Sabin, Ellen
- The Special Stories Series 2 (Moonbeam childrens book award winner 2009) – 4 childrens books that introduce Dyslexia, Autism, Down syndrome and Hearin By: Gaynor, Kate
- Trevor Trevor By: Twachtman-Cullen, Diane, Ph.D.
- We'll Paint the Octopus Red By: Stuve-Bodeen, Stephanie
- What I Like About Me By: Allia Zobel Nolan
- What's Wrong with Timmy? By: Shriver, Maria

Special Olympics Research Overview

**Special
Olympics**



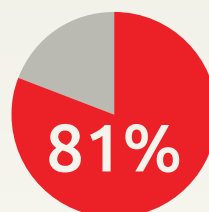
More than
**4.5
million**
Special Olympics
athletes
compete across
170
countries,
averaging
258
competitions
each day
around
the world.



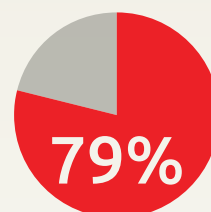
94% of Special Olympics athletes
reported improved sports skills.



Children ages 2-7 experienced a
7 month gain
in motor skills after participation in an
8-week Young Athletes program.



81%
of students say
that the Unified
Strategy is
changing their
school for the
better.

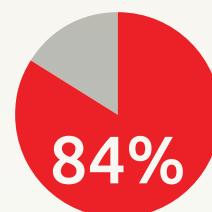


79%
of Unified
teammates
without
disabilities
reported
increased
understanding of
people with
intellectual
disabilities.



**65% of
parents**

felt that participation in
Special Olympics had raised
their expectations of their
sons and daughters.



84%
of healthcare
providers felt
better prepared to
treat people with
intellectual
disabilities.

Special Olympics'
brand ranks highly in
**familiarity
and
favorability
ratings.**



57%

Over half of athletes' siblings in the United
States felt that participation in Special Olympics brought
their family closer together.



Special Olympics Young Athletes Research

WHY YOUNG ATHLETES?

Participating in Special Olympics has been shown to inspire joy, improve self-confidence, bolster family relationships and improve parents' expectations of their children with intellectual disabilities (ID).^{1,2,3,4} While this is crucial for people with ID of all ages, Special Olympics' traditional sports program is only available to athletes ages 8 and over. Furthermore, for families experiencing having a child with ID for the first time, it can be challenging to find a social network for support and guidance. This network is crucial, as parents who have social support have better mental health and positive parenting interactions (hugging, praising, etc.) with their child with ID.^{5,6} Young Athletes (YA) engages children with ID between the ages of 2 and 7 in a sport and play program with a focus on activities that are important to mental and physical growth. The program benefits the child and the family, challenges expectations, forges relationships, fosters support networks, and builds crucial skills for young children.

"I have found a common ground – a place where my son and I can connect – through sports."

— Parent of Young Athlete, United States⁷

1 Harada, C. M., Parker, R. C., Siperstein, G. N. (2008). *A comprehensive national study of Special Olympics programs in China. A special report.* University of Massachusetts Boston. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.

2 Siperstein, G. N., Harada, C. M., Parker, R. C., Hardman, M. L., & McGuire, J. (2005). *Comprehensive national study of Special Olympics programs in the United States. A special report.* University of Massachusetts Boston. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.

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4 Kersh, J., & Siperstein, G. N. (2008). *The positive contributions of Special Olympics to the family.* Special Olympics: Washington, DC.

5 Wade, C., Llewellyn, G., & Matthews, J. (2015). Parent mental health as a mediator of contextual effects on parents with intellectual disabilities and their children. *Clinical Psychologist*, 19(1), 28-38.

6 Feldman, M., Varghese, J., Ramsay, J., & Rajska, D. (2002). Relationships between social support, stress and mother-child interactions in mothers with intellectual disability. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 15, 314–323.

7 Favazza, P., & Siperstein, G. (2006). *Evaluation of Young Athletes Program 2006.* Washington, DC: Special Olympics and University of Massachusetts Boston.

IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS

Children with ID often experience challenges developing motor skills.^{8,9} Research conducted by Special Olympics and its partners has found that YA improves the motor skills of participants in both U.S. and international contexts.

- A [U.S. study](#) showed that after two months of participation in YA, children with ID experienced a **seven month gain in motor skills**. Participants in YA **improved motor skills at twice the rate** of children who do not participate.
- **The benefits from YA persisted even after the program ended.** At 5 and 10 month follow-ups, children who participated in YA **maintained a 4 month advantage** in development on two of three areas where they improved.¹⁰
- A [study in Kenya, Tanzania, Venezuela, and Romania](#) found that **children who participate in YA outside of the United States also experienced significant improvements in motor skills**. For example, in Romania at the beginning of YA only two (18%) of 16 children were within one standard deviation of the average score for motor skills for their age and gender. At the end of the YA program, that number had risen to 11 children (69%).¹¹
- **Skills learned in YA translate to other settings.** A 2006 study found that 50% of teachers in the United States, 60% in Romania, and 44% in Latin America (Venezuela, Panama, Chile, and Paraguay) observed skills learned in YA being used in other activities or settings (at school or home).¹²

BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN WITH ID PARTICIPATING IN YOUNG ATHLETES



Children who participated in the YA program experienced a **seven month gain** in motor skills, twice the rate of children who did not participate in the program.



At 5 and 10 month follow-ups, children who participated in YA maintained a **four month advantage** in development on two of three areas where they improved.

8 Emck, C., Bosscher, R., Beek, P., & Doreleijers, T. (2009). Gross motor performance and self-perceived motor competence in children with emotional, behavioural, and pervasive developmental disorders: a review. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*, 51(7), 501-517.

9 Provost, B., Lopez, B. R., & Heimerl, S. (2007). A Comparison of Motor Delays in Young Children: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Developmental Delay, and Developmental Concerns. *Journal Of Autism & Developmental Disorders*, 37(2), 321-328.

10 Favazza, P. C., Siperstein, G. N., Zeisel, S., Odom, S. L., & Moskowitz, A. L. (2011). *Young Athletes intervention: Impact of motor development*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.

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12 Favazza, P., & Siperstein, G. (2006). *Evaluation of Young Athletes Program 2006*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics and University of Massachusetts Boston.



In addition to motor skill development, participants benefit from learning in a social environment with their peers.

- **89% of teachers in the United States reported that a benefit of YA was children having fun with peers.** Teachers in Israel reported similar benefits.¹³
- **Participants in YA improve their social skills.** One teacher commented: *“Many parents and grandparents had never placed their child in a group setting or group activities...By the end of the second or third week, we all could see differences in the child’s ability to listen, participate, socialize with adults and other children, and, of course improve in their motor abilities.”*¹⁴

YA creates an environment where children with ID can play with their peers, perhaps for the first time, while developing motor and social skills.

IMPACT ON THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

YA’s impact has a ripple effect that extends benefits beyond the participants in the program to the family and community. In this way, **YA serves as a catalyst for change in the community and a mechanism to enhance social inclusion for people with ID.**



FAMILIES

Families benefit in a number of ways, including helping parents understand what ID is, raising parent expectations, fostering support networks, and creating opportunities for family engagement. Studies have found that through YA, parents begin to better understand their child with ID:

- A 2014 study found that by demonstrating that children with ID can participate in and benefit from group activities, **parents became more willing to bring their children into social settings.** A parent from Romania commented, *“I was surprised how much he/she changed in his/her first group experience. We clearly need to do more group activities, which prior to this, I was afraid of.”*¹⁵
- **YA raises parents’ expectations of their child with ID.** In the United States, 21% of teachers reported that a benefit of YA was raising parental expectations of their child’s capabilities.¹⁶

¹³ Favazza, P., & Siperstein, G. (2006). *Evaluation of Young Athletes Program 2006*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics and University of Massachusetts Boston.

¹⁴ Favazza, P., Siperstein, G., & Ghio, K. (2014). *Young Athletes Globalization Project*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.

¹⁵ Favazza, P., Siperstein, G., & Ghio, K. (2014). *Young Athletes Globalization Project*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.

¹⁶ Favazza, P., & Siperstein, G. (2006). *Evaluation of Young Athletes Program 2006*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.



FAMILY NETWORKS

YA also builds social networks of families. Research has found that a major benefit of YA is **parents getting support through networking with other families.**^{17,18} A parent of a participant in the United States remarked: *“It provided opportunities to communicate with other parents about needs of other kids with disabilities. Connecting and sharing information is really a huge benefit...it gives you an opportunity to talk to someone that can relate to what it is like to have a child with disabilities.”*¹⁹

Another study in 2014 found similar results and showed that this knowledge sharing led to an **increased understanding of people with ID.** As a YA leader in Tanzania reported, *“The families feel relieved after learning that having a child with ID is not a personal issue/problem but it is common in the community.”*



COMMUNITY

Furthermore, YA is shown to have a **positive impact on the broader community.** Schools and community members who assisted with YA were given the opportunity to learn about and interact with people with disabilities. One volunteer remarked, *“At first, I did not know how to work [with] really young children with disabilities. So that was a new experience for me and one in which I learned a great deal.”*²⁰ YA provides the community with an opportunity to learn about ID and to embrace members of the community with ID and their families.

“Because of J. a whole world of kids with disabilities – a whole circle of families with children with disabilities has opened up for us. It is exciting and overwhelming to be a part of a new world – in the best way (sense). It changed my life.”

— Parent of Young Athlete, United States

17 Favazza, P., & Siperstein, G. (2006). *Evaluation of Young Athletes Program 2006*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics and University of Massachusetts Boston.

18 Favazza, P., Siperstein, G., & Ghio, K. (2014). *Young Athletes Globalization Project*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.

19 Favazza, P., & Siperstein, G. (2006). *Evaluation of Young Athletes Program 2006*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics and University of Massachusetts Boston.

20 Favazza, P., Siperstein, G., & Ghio, K. (2014). *Young Athletes Globalization Project*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.





Community: Enhanced interaction with and understanding of people with intellectual disabilities by community members, particularly university partners.

Family: Increased understanding of intellectual disability and willingness of parents to bring their child with an intellectual disability into social settings, as well as the development of support networks among parents.

Individual: Improvements in participants' motor skills, social skills, cognitive abilities, and adaptive skills.

KEY FINDINGS:

SPECIAL OLYMPICS YOUNG ATHLETES RESEARCH



In 2014, **110,486** children participated in YA in 140 Programs.²¹



Participants experienced a **7 month gain** in motor skills after participation in an 8-week YA program.²²



The benefits from YA continue even after the program ends. At 5 and 10 month follow-ups, children who participated in YA maintained a **4 month advantage** in development on two of three areas where they improved.²³



YA raises parents' expectations of their child with ID. In the United States, **21%** of teachers reported that YA benefited families by raising parental expectations of their child's capabilities.²⁴



YA forms a **community of support** for parents and caregivers of children with ID by creating a more **positive** view of their child, building a network of parents, and inspiring them to imagine a better, more **hopeful** future for their child.^{25,26}

21 2014 Reach Report (2014). Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.

22 Favazza, P. C., Siperstein, G. N., Zeisel, S., Odom, S. L., & Moskowitz, A. L. (2011). *Young Athletes intervention: Impact of motor development*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.

23 Favazza, P. C., Siperstein, G. N., Zeisel, S., Odom, S. L., & Moskowitz, A. L. (2011). *Young Athletes intervention: Impact of motor development*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.

24 Favazza, P., & Siperstein, G. (2006). *Evaluation of Young Athletes Program 2006*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics and University of Massachusetts Boston.

25 Favazza, P., & Siperstein, G. (2006). *Evaluation of Young Athletes Program 2006*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics and University of Massachusetts Boston.

26 Favazza, P., Siperstein, G., & Ghio, K. (2014). *Young Athletes Globalization Project*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.

SONJ MISSION STATEMENT:

To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities by giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

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