

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.

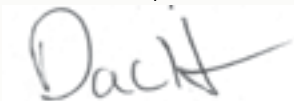
What is perhaps not as well understood, even by many in the field, is the subject of this population – a unified, inclusive approach that brings those with and those without disabilities together on the same playing fields. Individuals without disabilities are not there as coaches or mentors – although 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

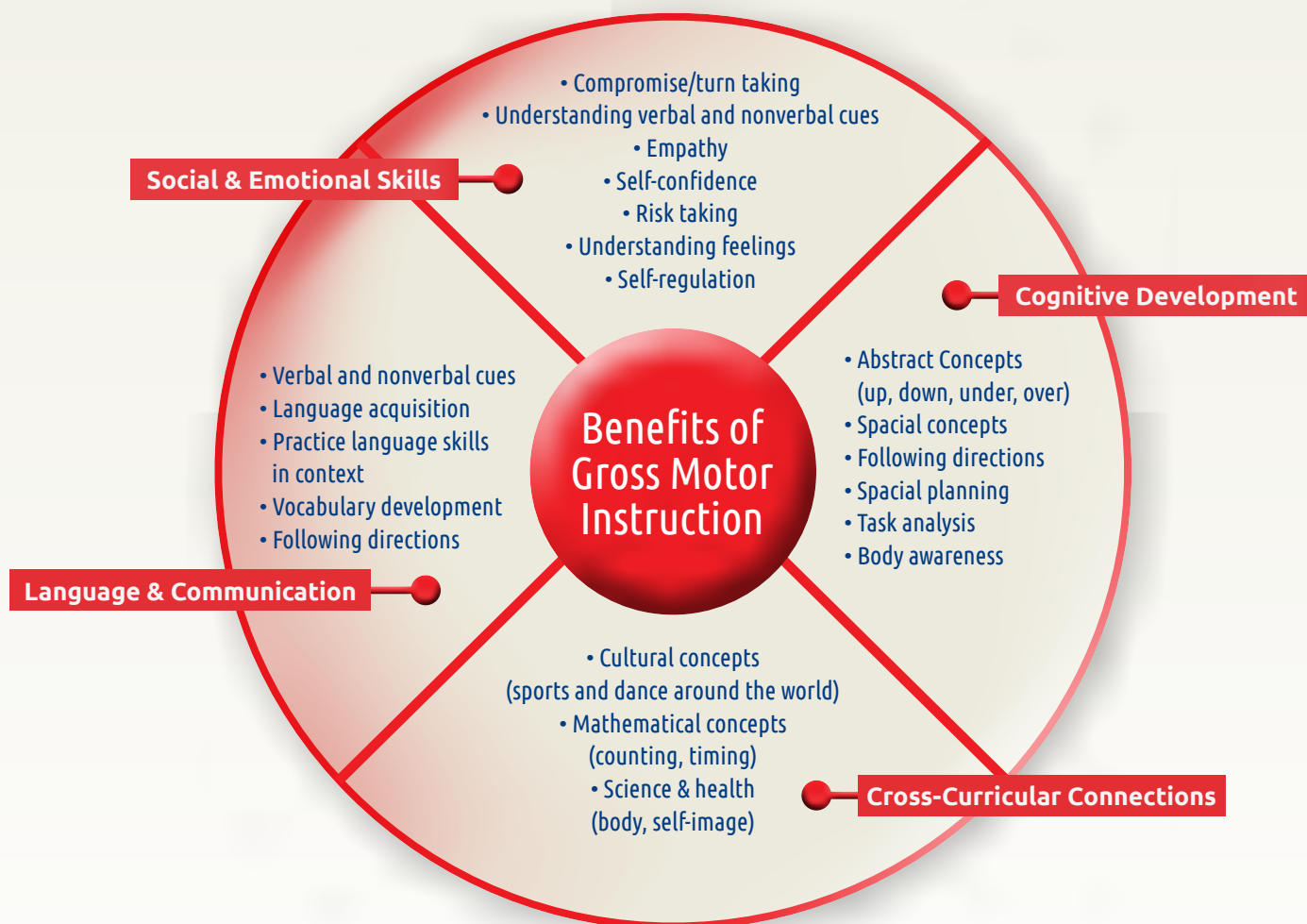


"Inclusion is a philosophy that asserts all individuals, regardless of ability, should participate within the same environment with necessary support and individualized attention. Inclusion is more than simply placing individuals together, it's a belief that all individuals belong and are valued" (Kasser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

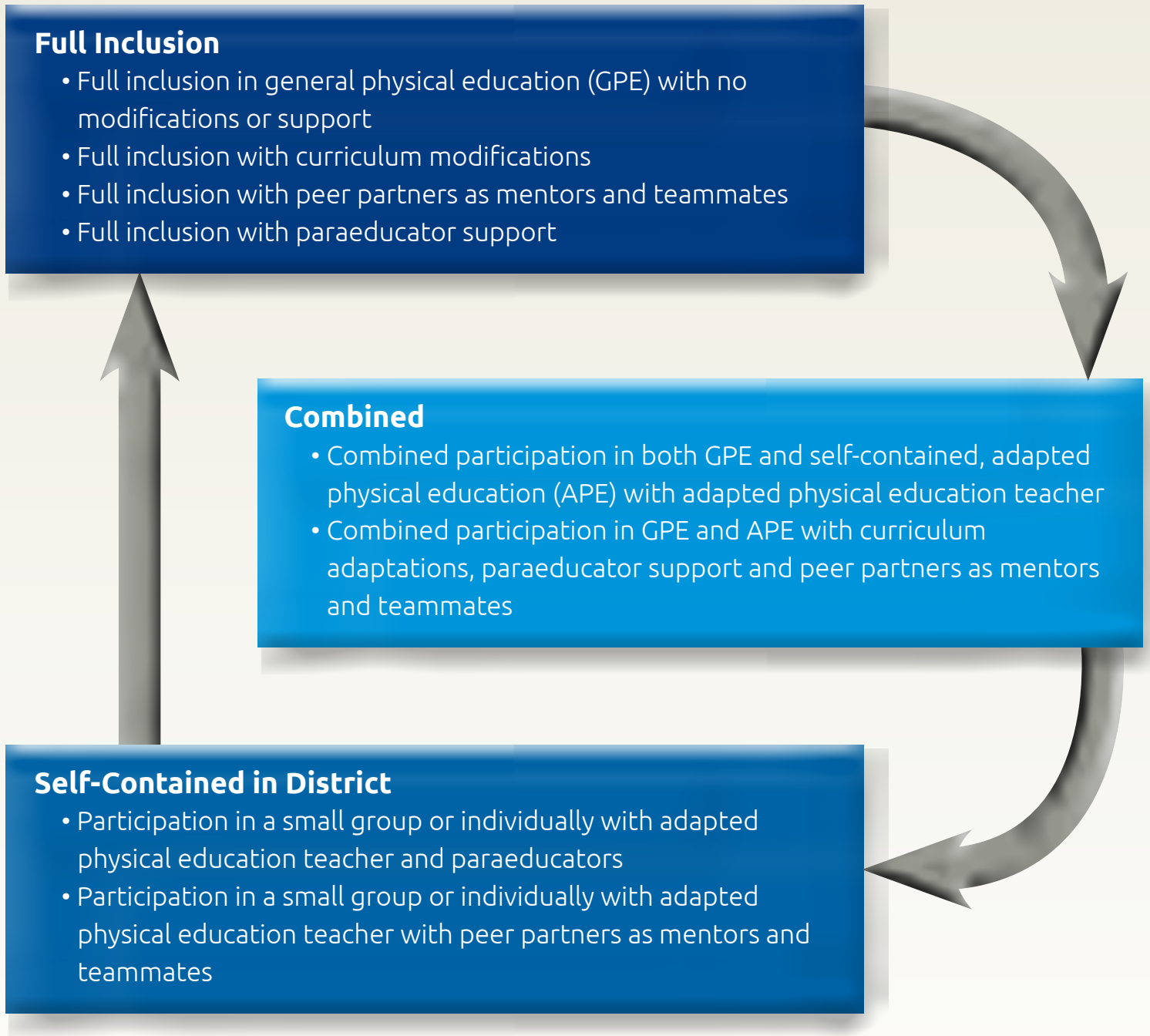


Diagram 1. In determining the least restrictive environment for participation, options along a continuum of environments, from self-contained to full inclusion, can be combined to address each student's specific abilities and needs. Placement should be viewed as fluid and flexible, where students can 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™

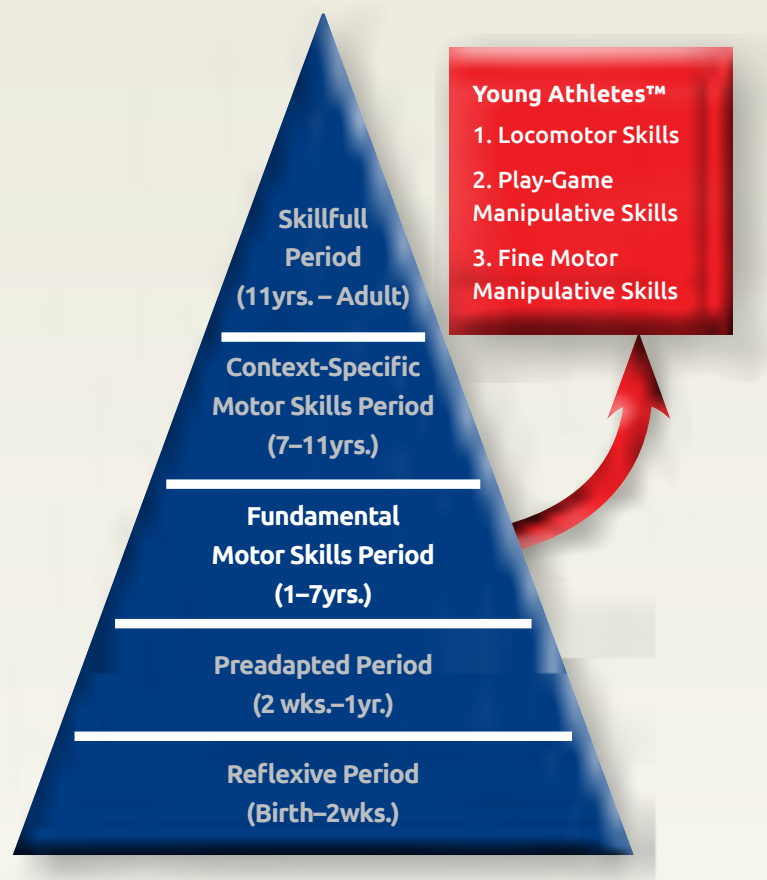
Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is an approach to teaching that is centered on the research of how young children develop and learn, as well as the knowledge and understandings of effective early education. DAP provides an individualized, child-centered framework for designing learning experiences 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.**

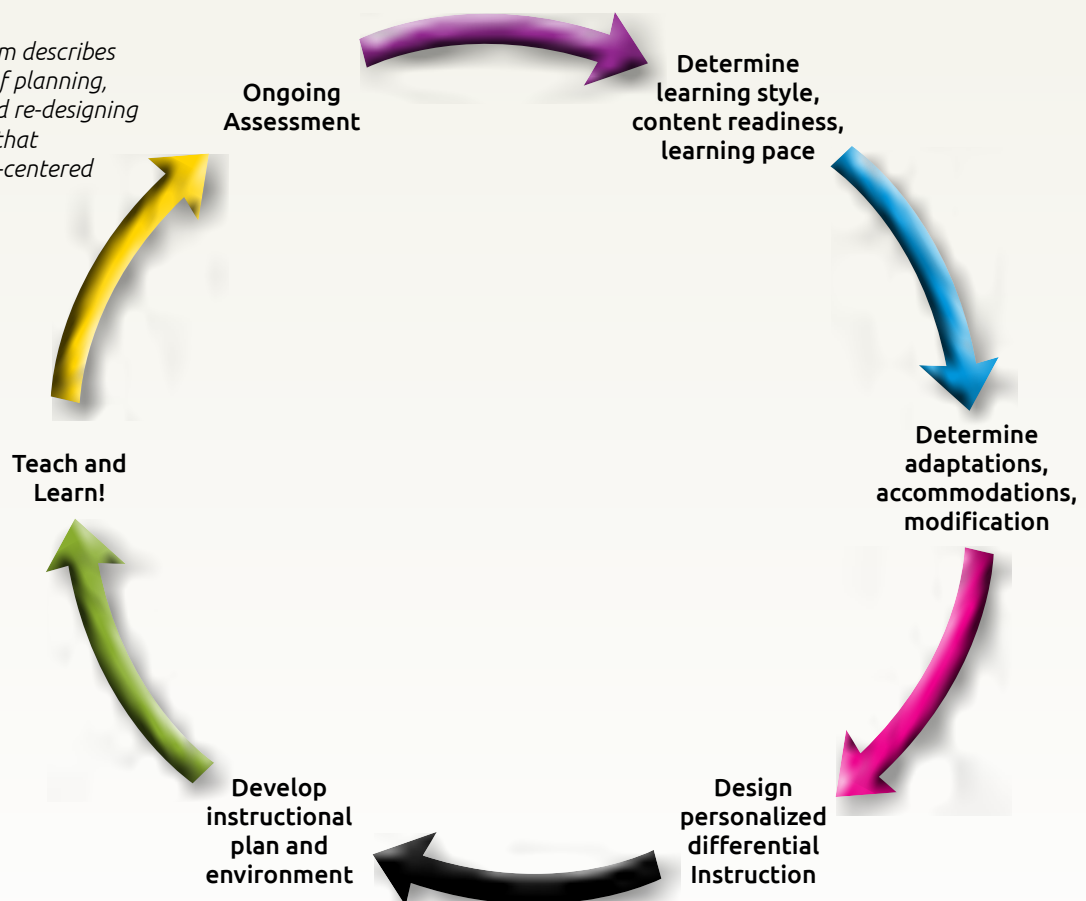
In Special Olympics the focus is always on what athletes CAN do. Athletes are applauded for the courage and bravery they demonstrate in their attempt to reach new goals and break through barriers. Embracing this simple philosophy is the first step to creating a classroom where every student can succeed,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



