How to Get More Students with Disabilities Integrated Into Extracurricular Athletics

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INCLUSION

• Rehab act of 1973 requires that students with disabilities be provided equal opportunity for participation in extracurricular athletic programs

• U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) issued Dear Colleague Letter issued clarification in January 2013
  – Clarifies when and how schools must include students with disabilities in mainstream athletics programs
  – Defines what true equal treatment of students athletes with disabilities means
  – Encourages and provides a road map for schools to create adapted programs for students with physical disabilities
WHO WE ARE

- The mission of the Athletics for All Task Force is to inform and provide the tools and guidelines by which coaches, athletic directors and school administrators can include students with physical disabilities in interscholastic sports.

- Task Force composed of national disability sport organizations that are working together to promote and facilitate inclusion of students with disabilities in sports.
TASK FORCE MEMBERS

• Active Policy Solutions
• American Association of Adapted Sports Programs (AAASP)
• Bay Area Outreach Program (BORP)
• BlazeSports America
• Bridge II Sports
• Competitive Edge Management
• Disabled Sports USA (DSUSA)
• Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association (GLASA)
• Lakeshore Foundation
• Louisiana Games Uniting Mind and Body (GUMBO)
• National Center on Heath, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD)
• Special Olympics
• United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA)
• Wheelchair & Ambulatory Sports USA (WASUSA)

Advisory/Supporter: U.S. Paralympics
WHAT WE OFFER

- Introductory sport guidelines and best practices for adapted sports considered easy to adapt to mainstream interscholastic sports
  - Track and Field
  - Tennis
  - Swimming
  - Alpine Skiing
  - Wheelchair Basketball
  - Sitting Volleyball
  - Boccia
  - Goalball

- Facilitation of training for your coaches and officials with adaptive sports experts

- Access to hundreds of community based adaptive sports organizations, resources and tools for specific sports

- Decades of experience in disability sport training, sport adaptations and adaptive equipment
SPORTS ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE STUDENT WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Benefits for students with disabilities who participate in sports are similar to students without disabilities

• Supports academics: students are more likely to have better grades, schools attendance and lower dropout rate

• Builds discipline, self-esteem, confidence and independence

• Enforces teamwork, skill development and goal setting

• Promotes healthy lifestyle

• Can be a predictor of later successes in college, career and community
SPORTS ARE IMPORTANT FOR YOUR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

• Promotes inclusion through training and competition
• Increases school and community pride
• Educates the community about the capabilities of individuals with physical disabilities
• The number of students with disabilities in the U.S. is nearly 246,000 according to the 2012 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Census. This includes students with visual and orthopedic impairments, and traumatic brain injury
SPORT MODELS

• Integrated (mainstream/inclusive): Students with disabilities participate alongside students without disabilities
  • Track and Field
  • Swimming
  • Tennis
  • Alpine Skiing

• Adapted: Disability specific sports
  • Wheelchair basketball
  • Sitting Volleyball
  • Boccia
  • Goalball

• Unified/Modified: Sports designed for individuals with intellectual disabilities and can include individuals with physical disabilities
  • Special Olympics Unified Sport Program
SPORT EXAMPLE: TRACK & FIELD

• 21 states are currently offering track and field events

• Track and field events can be added to the existing program, both at the local and state level:
  – Same venues; no modifications need to be made to track
  – Equipment: for wheelchair competition, athletes may compete in standard wheelchair or racing chair and for field events in throwing chairs
  – Eligibility: meet state eligibility requirements and rules
  – Recognition: receive scores for events they participate in
  – Simple Disability Categories: wheelchair/ sit down (spinal cord injuries), ambulatory (orthopedic), and visual impairment

• State model options are included in Athletics for All guidelines

• Consider starting with two track events and one field event: Examples of events: 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1600m, discus, shot put
Desmond Jackson blazed the trail as the first above-knee amputee to run on a high school track team in the state of North Carolina. He achieved regional and state awards for surpassing the standards set for a male above the knee amputee. Photo Credit: Hanger
Shot put

Discus
GETTING YOUR ADAPTED SPORTS PROGRAM STARTED

- Assess community school programs and needs
- Identify students with disabilities to participate
- Evaluate existing models in other states and see what kind of model would be a good fit for your district/city
- Use Athletics for All guidelines as a starting point to develop a plan
  - standardized seasons
  - regular-season and post-season competition
  - rule modifications
  - modify policies
  - establish process for conducting individualized assessment
  - safety guidelines
  - inclusive policies and procedures
  - identify schools that want to participate
  - host training session(s) for school coaches and officials
- Implement program
Spruce Creek High School junior, Auburn Smith, who has spina bifida, was told she would never play sports but is now a nationally ranked wheelchair tennis player and earned a spot on the school’s varsity team. Smith is allowed two bounces on her side of the court, instead of the traditional one, before returning the ball. Photo Credit: Orlando Sentinel
ALPINE SKIING
THANK YOU!

You’re taking the first step to implementing a more inclusive athletic program in your school.

Questions or comments? Contact:
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For material and additional information, visit our Athletics for All website:  www.athleticsforall.net