



Co-funded by
the European Union



INCLUSION AND DISABILITIES IN AND THROUGH SPORT

Best Practice #1 - Greece

University of Macedonia

No. 101089892 – IDI4Sport – ERASMUS-SPORT-2022-SCP



Key words.

Goalball, Visual disability, inclusive sport practices for students with visual impairments in mainstream schools.

1. Type of Disability

Please describe the type of disability that this practice is focused. If there is an official definition of the disability in European or National documents please provide it.

Visual Impairments (VI).

2. Organization & Reference

If applicable: Official data of organization, school, club etc. (name, address, email). Please give references such as internet source, homepage etc.

Aristotelio College of Thessaloniki, Address: Vissarionos 16, Pylaia, Thessaloniki. Email: gymnasio@aristotelio.edu.gr, Website: www.aristotelio.edu.gr, Teachers: Eftyxia Vogiatzi, Anna Zourna, Mary Papachristou.

3. Formal/Informal

Please state if the setting refers to formal or informal education (sport clubs etc.).

Formal Education, Junior High school, Students of 12-14 years of age.

4. Practice summary

Describe what and how was done (regulations of the sport/game/competition/physical activity), please state the specific context of the practice and the sport(s)/game/competition involved.

Goalball is a sport specifically designed sport for athletes with visual impairments. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), visual impairment refers to "a reduction in vision that cannot be corrected by glasses or contact lenses and reduces a person's ability to perform everyday activities." In Greece, visual impairment is defined in Law 3699/2008 as a disability that affects the ability to perceive and interpret visual information and includes total blindness, low vision, and colour vision deficiency. Practicing Goalball is focused on providing opportunities for individuals with visual impairments to engage in physical activity and sports, promoting inclusion, and enhancing their physical and mental well-being. The present practice involved introducing the sport of Goalball to non-disabled high school students as a way to increase their understanding of visual impairments. Goalball is a Paralympic sport designed specifically for athletes with visual impairments, and involves two teams of three players each attempting to score goals by throwing a ball with bells inside across the opposing team's goal line. The practice was implemented in a high school setting, with teachers working with non-disabled students to introduce the sport and educate them about visual impairments. The teachers began by explaining the rules and regulations of the sport, and demonstrating the proper techniques for throwing and defending. They also provided information on the different types of visual impairments and how they can affect individuals. The non-disabled students were then given the opportunity to play Goalball themselves, with the teachers providing guidance and support as needed. By participating in the sport, the non-disabled students were able to experience firsthand some of the challenges

and obstacles that individuals with visual impairments may face in their daily lives. This helped to increase their empathy and understanding towards individuals with visual impairments. Overall, Goalball is a unique and challenging sport that requires teamwork, communication, and spatial awareness. It provides a valuable opportunity for athletes with visual impairments to compete on an equal playing field and showcase their skills on an international stage.

5. Variations implemented

Please state any kind of useful variations (e.g., concerning settings, age of participants, types of disabilities and adaptations to other sports) of the practice.

As we don't have blind students in our school we used blindfolds for every player to simulate complete visual impairment. Further related information:

- **Court dimensions:** The court is 18 meters long and 9 meters wide, with a goal area at each end that measures 9 meters wide and 1.3 meters deep.
- **Equipment:** The ball used in Goalball is made of rubber and has bells inside it to allow players to track its movement. Players wear eyeshades to ensure that everyone competes on an equal playing field.
- **Teams:** Each team consists of three players, with three substitutes.
- **Duration:** A game consists of two 12-minute halves with a 3-minute break in between.
- **Scoring:** A goal is scored when the ball completely crosses the opponent's goal line.
- **Penalties:** Players can be penalized for certain actions, such as high ball contact or delaying the game. Penalties result in a free throw for the opposing team.

6. People involved

Please state organizations and people involved, provide types of disabilities participated in this specific good/best practice. If applicable, be concrete about the different roles of the people involved.

Teachers, students, parents. Dissemination within our school. As to the core of the practice: Goalball is a sport that involves many organizations and people at different levels, including players, coaches, referees, and administrators. During this specific practice the students of the school played the most significant of these roles (see paragraph 9).

7. National guidelines adopted

Please refer to the national guidelines that are met through the practice. Give basic legislation frameworks that can help teachers understand their legal-driven responsibilities towards their students.

In Greece, there are national guidelines and legal frameworks that are relevant to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in sports and physical activities, including Goalball.

Here are some examples:

1. The Greek Constitution: The Greek Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and affirms the right of individuals with disabilities to participate fully in social, economic, and cultural life.
2. The Law on Sports: This law sets out the framework for sports in Greece and includes provisions for the promotion of sports among individuals with disabilities. It requires the government to develop policies and programs to support the participation of individuals with disabilities in sports and physical activities.

3. **The National Plan for Sport:** This policy document sets out the government's priorities and strategies for promoting sports in Greece. It includes specific measures to promote the participation of individuals with disabilities in sports and physical activities, including the development of infrastructure and the provision of training and support for coaches and athletes.
4. **The Greek Disability Discrimination Act:** This law prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in various areas of life, including sports and physical activities. It requires schools and other institutions to provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities to ensure their full participation.
5. **The Greek Ministry of Sports and Culture:** The Ministry of Sports and Culture is responsible for implementing national policies and programs related to sports and physical activities, including those aimed at promoting the participation of individuals with disabilities.

Teachers and coaches working with individuals with disabilities in Greece should be aware of these national guidelines and legal frameworks and ensure that they are providing inclusive and accessible opportunities for their students. They may also seek guidance and support from relevant organizations and experts in the field of disability sports to ensure that they are meeting their legal-driven responsibilities towards their students.

8. Implications for teachers/practitioners etc.

Please write any useful implications (what teachers/coaches/physical educators should take into account: safety considerations, equipment needed, support needed) that the practice might have. This may include

focal points of the types of disabilities included and how these points were addressed, in terms of the participation in sports.

Some implications for teachers/practitioners implementing the practice of using Goalball to teach about visual impairments could include:

1. **Safety considerations:** Teachers should ensure that the playing environment is safe for all participants, including those with visual impairments. This may involve making adaptations to the playing space or providing additional supervision.
2. **Equipment needed:** Goalball requires specific equipment, such as a ball with bells inside and eye shades to simulate visual impairments. Teachers should ensure that they have access to this equipment and that it is in good condition.
3. **Support needed:** Students with visual impairments may require additional support or accommodations to fully participate in the activity. Teachers should be aware of the needs of these students and be prepared to provide appropriate support, such as guiding them during the game or providing audio instructions.
4. **Focal points of the types of disabilities included:** Teachers should focus on teaching their students about the specific types of visual impairments that can occur and how they impact a person's life. This can help to increase understanding and empathy among students.
5. **Participation in sports:** This practice can help students with visual impairments to feel included in sports activities and can also help to promote teamwork and cooperation among all students.

Overall, implementing the practice of using Goalball to teach about visual impairments can help to promote inclusion and understanding among students, while also providing a fun and engaging way to learn.

9. Innovative resources, materials, methods etc. used

Please refer to the resources, materials, methods etc. have been employed. Strategies for creating an inclusive environment, prioritizing accommodations for students with disabilities, forming/refining accessible facilities, equipment, and assistive technology. Please include techniques for adapting sports activities to meet the needs of students with disabilities, such as modified rules, specialized equipment and assistive devices.

Several innovative resources, materials, and methods were used to create an inclusive and accessible environment. Some of the strategies used include:

1. **Modified Rules:** The rules of Goalball were modified to accommodate students with visual impairments. For example, the ball was made audible by placing bells inside the ball, and the court was marked with tactile lines to help players locate themselves and the ball.
2. **Specialized Equipment:** Students were provided with specialized equipment such as blindfolds and protective gear to ensure their safety during the game. Additionally, specialized balls with bells inside were used to ensure that the game was fully accessible to all students.
3. **Assistive Technology:** The use of assistive technology such as screen readers and magnifiers was encouraged during the lessons to help students better understand the experience of those with visual impairments.
4. **Peer Support:** Non-disabled students were encouraged to provide social and emotional support to students with visual impairments by offering to guide them around the school or assist them during the Goalball games.

5. Adapted Teaching Strategies: Teachers were trained to use adapted teaching strategies that would cater to the needs of students with visual impairments, such as verbal descriptions and demonstrations of the game.

Overall, the program prioritized creating an inclusive and accessible environment by adapting the sport of Goalball to meet the needs of students with visual impairments. By providing specialized equipment, using assistive technology, and encouraging peer support, the program was able to create a safe and welcoming environment for all students to learn and participate in sports.

During this specific practice the students of the school played the most significant roles:

1. Introduction: One teacher was responsible to introduce the game to the students and to have a conversation with all the students involved about visual impaired people. He was also responsible to assign the students with the roles of: coach, referee, player, volunteer, or journalist.
2. Coaching: 2 students were the coaches of the two teams. Coaches play a critical role in developing players' skills and strategies, as well as providing guidance and support during training and competitions. One teachers supervised and helped the coaches.
3. Referees: 3 students were the referees of the game. Referees ensure that games are played according to the rules of the sport and make decisions on penalties and other matters during games. A teacher was supervising them and helped them if it was needed.
4. Players: Goalball players were 12 students of 13-14 years of age that were blindfolded.

5. Volunteers: there were 10 students that acted like volunteers, either to help the blindfolded kids (each volunteer was responsible for 2 players, and 4 were responsible for organizing the field, the chairs etc)
6. Journalists: 2 students were taking pictures to write an article at the school's newsletter.

10. Communication and collaboration strategies

If applicable, describe strategies for collaborating with other educators, parents, and students to ensure that everyone is working together to create an inclusive environment.

Strategies for collaborating with other educators, parents, and students can include:

1. Communication with the school administration to ensure that the necessary facilities and equipment are available for the practice.
2. Encouraging students to bring their parents or guardians to observe and participate in the practice to help them understand and appreciate the abilities and needs of their peers with visual impairments.
3. Collaboration with special education teachers and professionals to ensure that appropriate adaptations are made to the game to meet the needs of students with visual impairments.
4. Encouraging peer support and interaction by pairing students with and without visual impairments together to work on skills and play the game.
5. Providing ongoing communication and updates to parents and guardians about their child's progress in the practice, including any adaptations or accommodations made to meet their needs.
6. Involving the larger school community in the practice, such as hosting an exhibition match or tournament, to promote awareness and appreciation for students with disabilities.

11. Evaluation and/or reflection methods

If applicable, state how teachers planned to know, to what extent basic goals were met. That is, give any kind of evaluation practices, self-reflection methods, forms of data collection, post-event documentations and follow-ups. Also, report any positive feedback and reinforcement given to students with and without disabilities to encourage and motivate them to continue participating in sports.

In the context of the Goalball project, here are some evaluation and reflection methods that teachers can use:

1. Pre- and post-assessments: Teachers can conduct pre- and post-assessments of students' Goalball skills, understanding of the rules, and physical fitness to evaluate whether the basic goals of the program have been met.
2. Self-reflection: Teachers can reflect on their teaching practices and the effectiveness of their accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities. They can also seek feedback from students, parents, and other stakeholders to evaluate the impact of the program on students.
3. Feedback from students: Teachers can gather feedback from students with and without disabilities to evaluate their experiences in the program. They can use surveys, focus groups, or interviews to gather feedback and make adjustments accordingly.
4. Positive reinforcement: Teachers can provide positive feedback and reinforcement to students to encourage and motivate them to continue participating in Goalball. This can include recognizing individual achievements, providing verbal praise, and offering tangible rewards.
5. Documentation and follow-up: Teachers can keep detailed records of the program, including participation rates, types of disabilities included, and any modifications or accommodations made. Follow-up evaluations can be conducted to assess the long-term impact of the program on students.

Positive feedback and reinforcement can be given to students with and without disabilities by recognizing their achievements, such as scoring goals, exhibiting good sportsmanship, and showing improvement in their skills. Teachers can also provide verbal praise, such as congratulating students after a successful game or practice, and offer tangible rewards, such as certificates or medals for participation and achievements. These positive feedback and reinforcement strategies can help motivate and encourage students to continue participating in Goalball and other sports.

12. Training pathway for teachers for integrating this good practice

Please provide 5 to 15 practical tips to teachers of sports for implementing the proposed good practice. Ensure that tips: 1. refer both to formal and informal settings 2. contribute to the awareness of educators for the needs of students with disabilities 3. take into account the environmental/architectural and attitudinal barriers (such as inaccessible sport spaces, equipment needed, support provided), 4. provide individualized adaptations 5. Provide social and emotional support by encouraging social interaction and peer support 6. Provide positive reinforcement to motivate them to continue participating in sports and to develop their skills and abilities.

Some practical tips for teachers of sports for implementing the proposed good practice of integrating Goalball for students with disabilities:

1. Educate yourself: Take courses, attend seminars, or seek guidance from experts to gain knowledge and skills on teaching Goalball to students with disabilities.
2. Create an inclusive environment: Ensure that the environment is accessible and free from architectural barriers that may hinder the

participation of students with disabilities. This includes providing adapted equipment and assistive devices as needed.

3. **Individualize adaptations:** Develop adaptations to the game that meet the unique needs of each student with a disability. This may include modifying rules, equipment, or playing areas.
4. **Foster social and emotional support:** Encourage social interaction and peer support among students, including those with and without disabilities. This can be achieved by assigning students to work in pairs or small groups, and promoting teamwork and collaboration.
5. **Provide positive reinforcement:** Recognize and reward students' achievements, skills, and efforts to motivate them to continue participating in Goalball and to develop their skills and abilities.
6. **Collaborate with parents and other professionals:** Work closely with parents, physical therapists, and other professionals to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are met.
7. **Use appropriate language:** Use person-first language to show respect and focus on the individual rather than their disability.
8. **Train peers and staff:** Train peers and other staff members to support students with disabilities during practice and games.
9. **Involve students in planning:** Involve students in the planning and evaluation process to ensure their needs and preferences are considered.
10. **Seek feedback:** Gather feedback from students, parents, and other stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and make necessary adjustments.
11. **Monitor progress:** Monitor students' progress regularly and adjust the program as needed to meet their changing needs.
12. **Provide safety considerations:** Ensure safety during the practices and games, and provide necessary safety equipment.
13. **Promote inclusion:** Use Goalball as an opportunity to promote inclusion and break down barriers between students with and without disabilities.
14. **Make your own GoalBall with plastic bags:** In case there is not an actual Goalball, physical educators/teachers can take any ball that

exists in schools and place it inside 1 or 2 plastic bags. In this way, the ball will produce the necessary noise needed for students with visual impairments.