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INCLUSION AND DISABILITIES IN AND THROUGH SPORT

Best Practice #7 - North Macedonia

OCNM - Olympic Committee of North Macedonia

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



Key words. Please insert 3 to 5 key words that best describe the best practice

Youngathletes, Downsyndrome, Inclusion, Special Olympics

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.

Intellectual disability

2. Organization & Reference

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

Special Olympics Macedonia operates dedicated sport programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The organization employs two full-time staff members and five part-time staff members.

social media:<https://www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsNorthMacedonia>
https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.instagram.com%2F%2F%2Fspecialolympicsmacedonia%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR0PcC9dfs1FoKe2DFwjyTKCrzxKMZikmwCF8Y2wCImtxONYjjgsbGFEY70&h=AT0FrtZ640J7s7WoLsBMMj3jgtZT7j86tCxTjvHFOOurnxq2dRm-nbW6PXm8kf7EnvH-S4L18R5aAmpnYYQ2t7uTI4j92Ah-rEfR-8nwK0hc_rSEew2LM4N0aIuOSYiGX8ugBBhLENWF9Q

3. Formal/Informal

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

informal activity

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.

Based on the responses received from survey questionnaires submitted to 16 schools, it was found that 11 of them include students with disabilities, while 5 do not. The research team conducted three focus groups, involving a total of 28 participants from three distinct groups: students with disabilities, parents of students with disabilities, and teachers as well as representatives from the professional services of the schools. The selection of participants for the focus groups was carried out by the research team. The information source for this statement is the "MK_CWDinSecondaryEducation_Report_MK.pdf."

In addition, we organize a variety of activities such as events (including Basketball and Football week), sport practices in different sports twice a week, games, tournaments, and more.

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.

The age range targeted for children with intellectual disabilities spans from 2 to 9 years old. It is crucial to customize the activities to align with the abilities of the middle range of the group. This ensures that children within this range can actively participate without requiring significant modifications to the activities. For younger children, the activities can be simplified, whereas for older children, they can be made more challenging.

To accommodate children with specific disabilities, making adjustments to the environment can be highly beneficial. Modifying the lighting, either by brightening or dimming it, can assist children with conditions such as autism or visual impairments. Adapting furniture, such as lowering chairs or ensuring secure desks, and incorporating slant boards throughout the classroom for writing support can be advantageous for children with physical disabilities or orthopedic impairments. These adaptations are aimed at creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all children.

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.

Primary and secondary schools, sport federations, NGOs, individual coaches, teachers and volunteers and athletes from our country.

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.

The implementation of inclusive practices for both youngsters with and without intellectual disabilities reinforces the notion that sports serve as a powerful tool for integration and inclusion within society. Engaging in sports not only promotes social skills but also enhances overall well-being and health. It is important to prioritize safety measures and create an adaptive environment during every event to ensure the participation of all individuals.

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.

The primary objective is to maximize the duration of physical activity during each class session and impart skills and activities that can be practiced beyond physical education class. To motivate children to actively participate in physical activity, it is crucial to respectfully inquire about their preferences and interests, communicate clearly, actively listen, address individuals directly, respect personal boundaries, and exhibit flexibility when working with family members of individuals with disabilities.

Within our current societal context, it is common for parents to believe that their children with disabilities should attend specialized schools. Consequently, many parents opt to keep their children at home. Regrettably, social stigmas contribute to a sense of shame and hesitance in taking children with disabilities outside. Consequently, these children often encounter a lack of acceptance and understanding regarding their unique challenges and abilities.

To address these challenges, we employ various strategies and resources. These include adaptive didactic materials, sports equipment, music speakers for auditory stimulation, safety measures, and an adaptive environment for effective engagement. We also establish rules that can be adhered to by all participants, promote unified sports, and rely on experienced volunteers to support our efforts.

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.

Yes, we are collaborating with parents, educators and students all the time. They work together on our regular programs and projects.

<https://www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsNorthMacedonia/photos/pb.100054434683162.-2207520000./5041921979220161/?type=3>

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.

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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.

On a monthly basis, we hold a meeting, primarily attended by parents, where they have the opportunity to share their opinions and provide recommendations for future projects and workshops. It is of utmost importance to ensure clear communication and obtain explicit consent before making any physical contact with athletes.

This practice is particularly crucial when working with athletes who have autism, as they may have a strong aversion to touch and exhibit varying levels of sensitivity. Some individuals with autism may be hypersensitive or hyposensitive to touch, and certain textures, such as latex or rough surfaces, may cause discomfort or be disliked by them. By openly explaining your intentions and seeking permission before engaging in any physical contact, you can create an environment that is respectful and comfortable for athletes with autism.

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.

Teachers should endeavor to establish an environment of inclusivity that caters to the needs of all students, regardless of their abilities. This can be accomplished by fostering positive attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, recognizing their strengths, and placing emphasis on their abilities rather than their limitations. When it comes to students with disabilities, teachers should offer personalized adaptations to facilitate their engagement in sports. This may involve adjusting equipment or game rules, as well as incorporating assistive devices like wheelchairs or prosthetics.

Social inclusion and unified sports serve as powerful tools for enhancing the social skills and overall well-being of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

