

2013 Northwest Children's Conference

Aquatics and Inclusion

Intro: This model for Adapted Aquatics is based on a health club model for students with disabilities. The classes are comprised entirely of students who have current IEPs or 504 plans. The students must go through a qualification process to determine if Adapted Physical Education is necessary and to determine if adapted aquatics (an adjunct to adapted physical education), is appropriate to the student. The student's become eligible in the first grade and can remain in the program through Transition (18-21 years old) as long as they continue to qualify and the placement is still appropriate.

Structure: Classes take place at local recreation facility that is ran by the Parks and Recreation district.

- Students in grades 1-8 participate in a program that is conducted only in the pool. Students in grades 9 through Transition participate in classes throughout the facility that include the cardio/weight room, Zumba/cardio classes, yoga classes, spin classes, water aerobic classes, functional fitness, and lap swimming.
- Students attend 1hour and 15 minute sessions weekly throughout the school year. The sessions are broken down into 15 minutes of changing/arrival, 30 min structured learning time, 15 min free movement/recreational time, 15 minutes changing/departure. An additional 15 minutes of structured learning time is added to students in grades 9-transition. The older group is also given the opportunity to attend two weekly sessions.
- Sessions for grades 1-8 generally have 12-15 students of similar age (elementary or middle). Student sessions for grades 9-transition have 8-16 students. High school students participate in 1 aquatic session and one weight/cardio/fitness session per week. Transition students self – select what type of session they will participate in for a 9 week period.
- High needs students (students who require assistance changing, limited mobility or have extreme behaviors) are 1-1 (one student/one adult) Older students, or students with a higher degree of functionality can be in a 2-1 ratio. The adult is the student “buddy” and assists them with following cues, staying on task, following the lesson, asking questions and providing positive feedback. The buddy stays with the student throughout the entire lesson.
- Support is provided by Adapted Physical Education Staff, community volunteers, peer volunteers, school paraprofessionals and Parks and Recreation staff.
- Classes begin with an introduction on land with students sitting, a group warm up, lesson and end with free time. Older students wear pedometers and track their workouts each session.
- Aquatics lessons include stroke development, water safety, water accommodation, water aerobics, water fitness, water games, etc.
- Adapted Physical Education Staff conducts lesson, with other support personnel ensuring student safety, attention and participation.
- Each week has 1-3 main focal points, whether it is learning strokes, jumping/diving, water safety, lap swimming, water zumba, stations, etc. Focal points are reiterated several times through lesson

Lesson/Game Ideas- Almost any game or activity can be modified for the water, but here are a few of our favorites or student favorites.

- **Relay races** –Different teams use different equipment (big, floating mats are a huge favorite). Students swim a designated distance and hand off to partners, or have to collect a specific amount of equipment and return it to a given location. Extended lap relays are great for creating a sustained workout.
- **Sharks & Minnows-** Kind of obvious, but a fun, evolving tag game.
- **Aquatics Scavenger Hunt:** Teacher tosses different toys, equipment, etc. into the center of the pool. Students move throughout pool searching for a piece of equipment and must bring on piece at a time to the side of the pool where they match up the “found” piece of equipment with a matching piece of equipment in a ring on the side of the pool.
- **Water Zumba-** Zumba fitness in the water. Teacher leads lesson from the deck includes music. Students dance in the water
- **Water Aerobics-**Students grab the water barbells and run through a fitness and resistance routine.
- **Duck Race-**Relay races with rubber duckies.
- **Water Volleyball-** Volleyball in the water with a net and a beach ball
- **Stations-** Students rotate through 4 stations focusing on swimming on the stomach, swimming on the back, jumping and bobbing/diving for rings or fitness activities.
- **Safety-**Students learn to wear a life jacket, jump in with a life jacket correctly, how to rescue a drowning person from land without hurting themselves, how to be safe around water, how to survival float and how to do a group survival float. Older students learn to tread water and float.
- **Clean out your back yard-**Teacher dumps a bunch of equipment in the center of the pool and students have to work to keep their side “clean” by throwing it onto the other side.
- **Lap swim-** Continuous motion swimming, working on pacing, learning to change movements and never stop. We work on the ¼ mile, ½ mile and 1 mile.
- **Deep Water Aerobics-** Learn to aqua jog with a belt and barbells, do a dance routine in the deep water!
- **Buried Treasure-** Special days like the last day or before the Holidays the students dive for and find pennies that they get to keep.
- **Obstacle course-** Swim in, around, under, through obstacles to get through the course.

Why is this important? How does it apply to General Physical Education?

- **Part of the Community-** Students with disabilities are part of the community, and learning to go to a community facility, how to use the facility, and behave appropriately sets them up for success as adults and helps them actually join the community in a real way.
- **Obesity-**An individual with a disability is 62% more likely to be obese than a person without a disability. Many individuals with disabilities have cognitive, health, and mobility issues that impacted by the effects of sedentary lifestyle to a greater degree than those who don't have the same limitations. It can be really challenging for families with students with disabilities to get

past all the effort and planning it takes to go somewhere to be motivated to get out and be active and recreate in the community.

- **Knowing that ANYTHING can be modified-it just takes some creativity-** Students with disabilities often come with some very real and very big challenges to inclusion. Sometimes a need can be so large or a behavior can be so extreme it's really hard to see past the challenges to the person behind it. It can be really tough to think of ways to include the students in real and viable ways that are actually useful to the student throughout the lifetime. The health club model and a fitness facility can help expand some of those options.
- **Diversifying lessons helps everyone-** In reality very few students are naturally kinesthetic, rapidly acquire physical skills and have a true passion for every sport that comes their way. Diverse populations have diverse interest and motivation to move. Knowing how to flip a lesson around, change its focus, change its context, and change its content can help all students develop interest and motivation. Plus it helps create a welcome space and a place for students to invest in lifetime physical activity.
- **Meaningful Interaction-**It is hard to instruct a student where feedback comes at a minimum. Creating modifications for a student opens up a chance to get to know the student and that can help open the door to real, teachable moments from unexpected places.
- **Increased management skills-**Students with behavioral concerns, refusal behaviors, or difficult behaviors can help educators to learn new techniques, access new resources, and collaborate with other professionals in order to find a workable way for the student to be involved. The skills required to stop an escalation or deescalate a student can be transferred to other students as well.

Who to get to know...

- **Case Manager!**-The student's case manager is a great resource, can give you access to the IEP/504, can help with social stories, PECS cards, IPADS, communication devices, behavior plans, penny boards and working with staff that joins the students in the class. They often have access to computer programs such as BoardMaker that can help create visual media to help a student succeed. Stuck on what to do? A case manager is a good go to for figuring out a given student.
- **Autism Specialist, OT, PT, other staff-**These folks are usually through your local ESD, but can help with creating plans for successfully including a student and working with the student, or identify a key element that acts as a hurdle for a given student.
- **Adapted Physical Education Specialist-** Modifying is what they do. Need help? Check in with them. They really appreciate the chance to collaborate and find a better way for the student to fit into your class.
- **Paraprofessionals-**These are the people who are often with the students the most. They know what motivates them, what can act as an obstacle and what they are interested in. Sometimes they have a tough job with diapers, transfers, behavior, etc. Getting to know the paraprofessionals in your class can be an enormous asset and can increase investment in your lessons.

Techniques/Helpful Hints/Modifications:

General:

- **VISUAL MEDIA**-Want a new best piece of equipment? Make a sign! Pictures, written words, social stories, arrows, list of activities for the day, examples of equipment, make an X on the floor with tape for a home base, visual demonstrations, whatever. Show it, don't say it. Visual media allows a reference point for the student (and sometimes the helper) to go back to and can redirect them back to the task at hand. It also allows you to move on while students with processing delays have the chance to react. It can also help students who struggle with anxiety or transitions prepare for what's coming next.
- **One or two step instructions or critical elements at a time:** Students with processing delays, language challenges, etc. either take a long time or cannot process multiple step instructions. Some students have great receptive language (can understand what was said) but take a while to respond. Give one or two clear instructions at a time, repeat it and ask them to repeat it.
- **Pick your battles:** Sometimes it is just not a good day to learn. Whether something happened at home, the medication changed, their clothes are bugging them, another student had an episode in the class, etc. the student could be riding the edge. Picking a simple continuous activity with a very clear number of repetitions that the student likes can be a good option, even if the class needs to something different. If it becomes a consistent issue, then look to figure out what is causing the difficulties. Wanted them to do 10 repetitions? Ask for 5 and let them break it up. Willingness to let go of a specific desire for today can pay off long term.
- **Expectations are good, healthy and important-** All students need clear expectations. It doesn't change just because a student has a disability. Make sure expectations are clear, achievable, and reasonable and the student can be accountable for it. If a student needs a time out or a break in order to collect themselves for the class, that's ok too. To not have expectations of students with disabilities is to essentially say that they can't do what you are instructing, when most of the time with a few modifications and a little help, they can.

Autism/Emotional Disturbance/Sensory deficit/Behavior/Oppositional Defiance

- **Touching**-Most students with Autism, Behavioral Disorders, Emotional Disturbance, etc. are VERY sensitive to touch. Sometimes it's necessary to use touch to produce a desired motor movement or assist with a movement, or maybe you are a pat the shoulder kind of teacher. Ask before you touch. Example: "I need to touch your hand to show you how to hold the equipment, are you ok with that? Or "Would you like to give me a high five?" If they say no, don't touch. They don't always say no. Respecting their space goes a long, long way in developing a relationship, and builds trust quickly, which is key to motivating some students. Plus many get a lot of hand over hand help all day long and may just have enough of people in their space.
- **Scripting**-Scripting is when a student uses a movie, commercial, cartoon, book, etc. to communicate in some way. It is usually rote and a character in the story, and they are either fixated on the topic or using it to try and tell you something. Asking what movie or show they are watching can help them to stop. "What movie are you watching right now? SpongeBob? Ok, Can you put it away so we can get to work?" or "I don't understand what you are telling me with the show, can you tell me in your own words?"

- **Stimming-** Stimming is a repetitive action that a student often does to calm down, help with all the input from the environment, etc. As long as a stim is not overly disruptive, injurious, inappropriate or prevents the student from engaging, letting it go can actually help the student. If it is an unproductive stim, have the student do something similar but more appropriate.
- **Change the condition:** If a given condition is causing the student problems, identify it and change it. Some students can't stand orange life jackets around their neck and will melt down. Changing the life jacket to vest type can help. Many students absolutely cannot stand wet baggy shorts touching their legs. It had ruined many lessons, so having snug boy short style speedos changed everything for our students. Can't stand the feeling of water on the feet? Wear water shoes. Don't like "floaty legs?" Put ankle weights on the student's legs. Students often get fixated on the baby pool and will melt down every session because they would rather be there than the big pool, so we outlawed the baby pool for everyone. Everyone starts in the big pool and moves on. It cut our accommodation times by two-thirds. Want to use music but it drives a student bonkers? Have them wear ear phones or a more subtle option like ear plugs. It can tone things down just enough. This is a chance to be observant and creative. Unusual solutions can really change a class for a student.
- **Perseveration-**Some disorders can cause a student to get completely stuck. They will repeat a request, a want or something they don't want to do. The student will often verbally repeat the same thing over and over again, and can be really tough to redirect. An Example would be of a student who is completely fascinated with technology, to the point if a person walks by with a cell phone 20 minutes of the lesson will be lost. In this case, he is kept away from technology except as a reward and is given a timer that beeps when his time is up. He is learning to control his interest so that it is positive but not disruptive. Another example is "I don't want to go off the diving board? Ok, but let's jump from the side.
- **Equipment-** Many students with Autism use specialized equipment in the classroom, weighted vests, leg weights, ear phones, PECS books, Social Stories, Penny Boards, etc. These can all be used in Physical Education. Their case manager would know if one particular thing works and how to get ahold of it.

Cerebral Palsy/Muscular Dystrophy/Other Movement impairments

- **Transfers-**Learning how to do safe transfers can help the student participate in the class in many levels. If the student knows how to transfer themselves give them a safe place and a little time to do it. If the student needs your help, make sure you know how to do it safely for both yourself and the student.
- **Orthotics, back braces and other supports-** Many students need these supports to help maintain good alignment and posture, however they can limit flexibility and movement. Allowing a little extra time can help. Some students refuse to use them, but really need them. Find out if they are in the classroom.
- **Wheelchairs-** A lot of things can be attached to a wheelchair with Velcro, including hockey sticks, catch pads, almost anything. Wheel chairs are also made to disassemble, usually with a push of a metal pop button. Knowing how to operate the chairs of your student, including

the brakes can help. However, if the student is fully capable of operating it themselves, ask first, it is an extension of the student, and respecting the space is a good idea.

- **Surgery-** Many students have had surgery, whether it is a release (to reduce tension on tendons), or to correct a medical issue, knowing the limitations from the surgery can help you understand what they can and can't do in class. Many students in wheelchairs have hip issues, find out what those limitations are or if they have a specific limitation for safety.

Down Syndrome, Developmental Delay, Intellectual Disability

- **One step directions and Signs-**These are your best friend. So is a known home base.
- **Sign language-** Learn a few key signs, such as stop, go, walk, run, no, yes, and sit. Most students with language or processing delays have seen these signs at one time or another, even if they haven't they are easy to learn and VERY, VERY helpful.
- **Stubborn-** Resistance or complete shutdown is really challenging, particularly for a PE teacher. If a student sits down and refuses what do you do? Dragging the student through the lesson isn't really a viable direction to go. Choice is a great option. Present two choices you can live with that the student can choose from the choices. The student may be working for something as a reward, and that can be motivating, or they may have a consequence on a behavior plan as well. Ignoring works well too. Sometimes the behavior is for attention, positive or negative. Acknowledge it, present two choices, and move on. If the student is in an unsafe spot, then they can be moved, but otherwise ignoring can shorten a behavior issue quickly.

Resources

- **Associations-**Every disability has a national association related to it. The websites are excellent sources for reliable information on a given disability, as well as safety concerns and other links.
- **Human Kinetics-** This publisher specializes in movement publications. They have a large library of adapted books.
 1. **Inclusive Physical Activity, A lifetime of Opportunities-** Susan L. Kasser, Rebecca K. Lytle
 2. **Strategies For Inclusion, A handbook for Physical Educators-**Lauren J. Lieberman, Cathy Houston-Wilson
 3. **Adapted Physical Education and Sport-**Joseph P. Winnick
 4. **(Not a Human Kinetics Book-Found on Amazon) Neurodiversity: Discovering the Extraordinary gifts of Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, and Other Brain Differences—**Thomas Armstrong, PHD
- **YouTube-** The possibilities for understanding and seeing what an individual with disabilities can do are pretty limitless.
 1. **In My Language-** By Silentmiaow