**Inclusion in Physical Education**

**Inclusion** refers to the process of educating students with disabilities along with their general peers. The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act, the US’s special education law, states that physical education is a required service for individuals ages 3 through 21 who qualify for special education services because of a specific disability or developmental delay.

**Providing the needs for students with disabilities and devising accommodations are a team effort. Two of the most available hands in general physical education are paraprofessionals and peer facilitators.**

**Paraprofessionals** or teacher’s assistants generally work with students with disabilities one-on-one. The paraprofessional supports and assists the student throughout the day in academics, art, music, physical education, recess, lunch and toileting. The paraprofessional has great insight into a student’s abilities, attitude and desires. A paraprofessional can greatly influence a student’s cognitive, social and physical development.

**Peer Facilitators** are students in the general physical education class that assist a student with disabilities. Peers provide modeling for behavior, physical skills, and socialization that students with disabilities often do not have the opportunity to gain in other aspects of their day. Research has shown that all children derive more value socially from other children than they could ever obtain from interacting with adults.

**Including Students With…**

**Wheelchairs**

**Students with Upper Body Control**

* Students in wheelchairs can push a ball out of their lap in attempt to knock down bowling pins.
* They can use a bowling ramp to knock pins down, to aim at other targets, or to play catch with a peer.
* They can catch balls or beanbags thrown by a partner using a milk jug scoop, small fishing net or a box on the lap.
* Tie a rope to a door handle, the bleachers, a goal, or a sturdy object and have students pull themselves in their chairs to the objects (this is obviously for students with good upper body strength).
* Have students toss beanbags at targets.
* Tether a whiffle ball to the chair and have the student throw the ball at the target and then pull the ball back.
* Have students practice driving their wheelchairs, electric or manual, through cones.
* Have them shoot baskets at a lower goal or makeshift goal (trashcan, box or basket).
* Have them throw the soccer ball at the goalie set up on the sideline.
* Have them volley balloons or beach balls back and forth with a partner.
* They can hit a ball off of cones or a tee using a bat, paddle, racket or hands.

**Students with No or Limited Upper Body Control**

* Use a bat, racket or hand to hit balls.
* Use a noodle to hit balls thrown by a peer.
* Throw Frisbees at bowling pins.
* Hit ball with a hockey stick in attempt to score on a goalie.
* Drive the wheelchair in attempt to dribble the ball (use a larger ball).
* Use a box to catch objects thrown by the peer.

**Intellectual Disabilities**

* Be patient and remember the student has delays that will hinder understanding, progression, and success.
* Be flexible; know that the students will sometimes break the rules because they don’t understand them, so reiterate or use simpler cues.
* Have peers make up rules that others can understand and that are fair for everyone.
* Recognize that you make a difference in the student’s experience.
* Have a positive attitude toward inclusion, and include the peer facilitators and paraprofessionals in the process.
* Find a student’s strengths and develop those strengths.
* Provide lots of positive reinforcements and feedback. High fives and words of encouragement go a long way for students who are not motivated.
* Use concrete barriers such as spot markers (poly spots, cones, or rope) for games, skills, or drills.
* Modify the equipment so that it is less intimidating or easier to use; examples are lighter balls and rackets.
* Modify the rules based on the learner’s level of comprehension.
* Break tasks into smaller steps to keep students from becoming overwhelmed. This will minimize frustration.
* Demonstrate the steps.
* Plan multiple activities to cope with shorter attention spans.
* Look for small achievements over time – you will see gradual improvements.
* Use a consistent routine.
* Expect students to participate, to be nice to others, and expect them to listen when you are talking.
* Understand that students with intellectual disabilities are a lot like their general peers and need as many of the same experiences as possible.

**Students with Cerebral Palsy**

* Have students use paddles and balloons with a partner.
* Have students throw at fun targets on the sideline.
* Have student throw and catch with a partner.
* Have student practice kicking with a partner or at a goal with the goalie.
* Have student practice any sport skill with a partner.
* Tie a rope to a doorknob and allow student to sit on a scooter and pull themselves with the rope.
* Have student practice skills assigned by the physical therapist to improve flexibility, mobility, strength, or range of motion under the guideline of the paraprofessional.
* Assign peer helpers who have been trained in the safety aspects of assisting the student.
* Give the student choices.

**Autism Spectrum Disorder**

* Emphasize social interaction
* Encourage staying on task
* Adapt communication
* Allow extra response time
* Use positive reinforcers
* Use written language strategies
* Use pictures
* Use social stories

Rouse, Pattie. *Inclusion in Physical Education: Fitness, Motor, and Social Skills for Students of All Abilities*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2009. Print.