

Ability Awareness Activities

Presented by

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Purpose: To collaborate with general physical educators, recreation coordinators, para educators and peer tutors to simulate what it is like for a general physical education student to be challenged with a synthetic disability.

Goals: To educate and improve the perceptions of general physical education teachers and students about different disabilities and eliminate some of the negative stereotypes, misconceptions and misunderstandings about people with disabilities through **ABILITY** awareness activities.

Basic Principles of Disability and Ability Awareness Programs

1. Discuss the proposed program with all students with disabilities in the class to ensure comfort and understanding.
2. Parents of all students should also be informed of any sensitivity activities planned throughout the year.
3. Always use person-first terminology when discussing individuals with disabilities; in other words, put the person before the disability, as in the phrase “individuals with disabilities” (rather than a “disabled person”).
4. Do not promote pity. Individuals with disabilities do not want pity; they want people to understand who they are and what they can do as people. Promote the idea of ability over disability. Show the students what people with disabilities can do.
5. Disability/ability awareness activities should not be a one-week or one-month unit. Awareness activities should be on-going throughout the school year and throughout the student’s schooling. This will show students that disabilities do not go away, but that they are lifelong and need to be considered in every unit and in every place they go.
6. The goal of all these activities is to bring all students to level III, and create advocacy for students with disabilities.

Three Levels of Awareness:

Level I: Exposure

At this level of awareness, students are exposed to individuals with disabilities through various methods. A good starting method is to simply describe the disability itself. The experience at this level helps students without disabilities to realize that they share characteristics with those who have a disability.

Examples:

- Invite speakers who have disabilities.
- Read and distribute newspaper articles, books, and literature about people with disabilities.
 - <http://www.dizabled.com/> - Disability Humor
- Watch videos about people with disabilities.
 - [Team Hoyt - Dick and Rick Hoyt](#)
 - [J Mac - A Hoop Dream](#)
 - [Nick Vujicic](#)
 - [Aaron Fotheringham - ESPN - Breaking Barriers](#)
 - [Dreams](#)
 - [What's it like to be hearing impaired?](#)
 - [What's it like to be visually impaired? -- See here](#)
 - [Cerebral Palsy Remix](#)
- Visit web sites about people with disabilities.
 - Too many to mention!

Level II: Experience

At this level, students in the class have opportunities to actually experience a disability for a short time. The teacher must introduce the activities so that a positive, comfortable environment is created.

Stations:

1. Fine Motor Control Simulation - Put gloves on and attempt the following:
 - Button and unbutton one of the long sleeve shirts provided
 - Pick up individual coins and place in the bowl
 - Pick up and separate the small plastic cylinders by color
 - Untie and tie your own shoes
2. Artificial Hands/Arms – Prosthesis Simulation: Use tongs to attempt the following:
 - Untie and tie your shoes
 - Pick up a pen and write your name on a piece of paper
 - Pick up coins and place in the container
3. Blind/Visually Impaired Simulation – Pair up with another student and stand on the poly spots (one student must wear the goggles/blindfold)
 - Toss various pieces of equipment back and forth
 - Try Float R' Balls with bells, beeper balls or soccer balls with bells for auditory tracking
 - Partners switch using the goggles/blindfold and repeat

4. Scooter Board/Wheelchair Slalom – Orthopedic Impairment Simulation:
 - Use LEGS/FEET ONLY on a slalom course to simulate movement difficulties
 - Use ARMS/HANDS ONLY on a slalom course to simulate movement difficulties
5. Cerebral Palsy Simulation – Place a bean bag between your knees and right/left elbow/hip (do not allow the bean bag to drop during this activity)
 - Walk to one of the poly spots on the floor
 - Perform the exercise/activity shown on the poly spot several times
 - Rotate around the poly spots until you have tried all stations
6. Specific Learning Disability Simulations
 - Hold a 3x5 card on your forehead using you DOMINANT hand
 - Write the word “ZONKER” on the card with your NON-DOMINANT hand
7. Visual Perception – Dyslexia Simulation
 - Write your name on the other side of the 3x5 card using your NON-DOMINANT hand while looking in the mirror (make sure that the writing appears the right way in the mirror)
8. Speech Impairment Simulation
 - Place 5-6 marshmallows in your mouth **at one time** and say the sentences/phrases (on your handout) to your partner. **DO NOT** use your hands to assist your expressions. Your partner should attempt to write down the correct sentence/phrase.
 - i. Create some sentences to use here

Stations Signs (enlarge and use station information below as signs)

Station #1

FINE MOTOR CONTROL SIMULATION

- **Put gloves on and attempt the following:**
- **Button and unbutton a shirt**
 - **Pick up individual coins and place in/out of the bowl**
 - **Untie and tie your shoes**
 - **Dial a number on your cell phone**
 - **Attempt to use the buttons on your watch**
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Station #2

ARTIFICIAL HANDS/ARMS –PROTHESIS SIMULATION

- Use ONE set of tongs & attempt the following:
 - Untie and tie your shoes
 - Pick up a pen and write your name on a piece of paper
 - Pick up coins and place in/out of the container
 - Remove/return your watch to your wrist
 - Remove/return a ring to your finger
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Station #3

BLIND/VISUALLY IMPAIRED SIMULATION

- Pair up with a partner and attempt the following:
 - Take turns wearing the goggles
 - Toss various pieces of equipment back & forth
 - Partner zip-line:
 - Guide your partner using the zip line (with goggles)
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Station #4

SCOOTER BOARD SLALOM

- Use LEGS/FEET only on a slalom course
 - Place arms inside of your shirt
 - Attempt while balancing a bean bag on your head
 - Attempt with ONE leg only
 - Attempt course going forwards
 - Attempt course going backwards
 - Attempt using HANDS only☺
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Station #5

CEREBRAL PALSY SIMULATION

- Place a bean bag between your knees and right/left elbows/hips
 - Do NOT drop the bean bag during this activity
 - Walk to each activity on the floor
 - Perform the activities several times
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Station #6

SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY SIMULATION

- Hold a 3 x 5 card on your forehead using your DOMINANT hand
 - Use your NON-DOMINANT hand to write the following:
 - “ZONKER”
 - Add 233+399. Be sure to show your work.
 - Attempt to write your work address
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Station #7

VISUAL PERCEPTION – DYSLEXIA SIMULATION

- Look in the mirror. Be sure the writing on the index card appears correct from this view (mirror).
 - On a 3 x 5 card use your NON-DOMINANT hand to write the following:
 - Your full name
 - “I love PE!”
 - Write the name of your favorite sports team
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Station #8

SPEECH IMPAIRMENT SIMULATION

- Place 5-6 marshmallows in your mouth at one time.
 - Turn a card over and attempt to say the sentence provided to a partner.
 - The partner will try to comprehend what you are trying to say.
 - DO NOT use your hands to assist your expressions.
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Level III: Ownership

By accomplishing the first two levels, ownership is achieved when students with and without disabilities become advocates for individuals with disabilities. They take it upon themselves to ensure that people with disabilities are being treated fairly and equally by society leading to financial stability, accessibility, independence, and recognition.

Helpful Tips:

- Set up stations in advance with numbers, definitions of disabilities, equipment and directions for the activity...make sure you identify any potential hazards or safety concerns.
- Train peer tutors, physical education teachers and para educators how to run the stations and present the activities to the general education students. Your primary function will be to supervise all the stations, time the rotations and to greet and debrief the students.
- If you do not have peer tutors you can recruit a handful of motivated and responsible general education students willing to volunteer to be trained for the event.
- Try to reserve an indoor area such as a multi-purpose room, large classroom, gymnasium or cafeteria so you can set up all the equipment and stations. This will allow for a more controlled environment, weather will not be an issue, students will have fewer distractions and your equipment will be safe and secure.
- As students enter the activity area, hand them an index card with the number of one of the stations written on it. Organize into stations based upon the number found on his/her index card. Use a signal to rotate groups among the stations. Approximately 5 minutes is needed for each station. Make sure to collect the index cards used to organize the students into stations.
- This could also be in conjunction with an Ability Awareness Week – where other content areas could become involved to promote awareness across the curriculum.
- This is an excellent opportunity to have a fundraiser for the Adaptive/General Physical Education program. A concession stand could be set up to sell approved food/drink items, school supplies, raffle tickets and collect donations.
- Consider a school-wide “Ability Awareness Week” and organize several activities across the curriculum.
- Try to advertise and market your event by utilizing the school paper, announcements, letters to parents and school calendars.
- Set up multi-media equipment so you can show video clips and navigate the internet.

Source:

Lieberman, L., & Houston-Wilson, C. (2009). *Strategies for Inclusion (2nd Ed.)*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Johnson, J., & Pierce, J. (2001). *Ability Awareness Kit*. Atlanta, GA: Sportime.