

# Steps Towards A More Inclusive Physical Education

Rebecca Foster and Emma Richards offer a practical guide to support teachers working with students with impairments.

Teachers face increasing pressures and expectations that expand far beyond normal teaching practice, but may have little formal training to facilitate the learning of disabled students, and may have very limited resources by which to do so [1]. Yet, teachers are still expected to create an inclusive space.

For example, though thought to be inclusive, disabled students may still be singled out or segregated from peers if the teacher is unable to (or does not have the resources to) create an inclusive activity [2][3]. Moreover, inclusive training may not reflect real world issues related to inclusive teaching practice [4]. Considering the effort over the last 30 years to promote inclusion within PE, and the continual barriers to realising this inclusion, it is apparent that an applied inclusive practice is currently lacking within mainstream education [5].

We introduce the notion of being an **ally**. Unconsciously, teachers may already be an ally for disabled students as they provide an empowering experience for all pupils [6]. As yet, however, there is very little information regarding being an allied teacher within a PE context. We address this gap by suggesting ways in which PE teachers can be allies of disabled students. That is, by

- reflecting on different disability models,
- (ii) utilizing the Inclusive Spectrum,
- (iii) embodying allyship in wider practice.

## Utilizing the Inclusive Spectrum

One way a PE teacher can become more inclusive in their practical delivery is to use the Inclusion Spectrum (IS) [7]. The IS, is a framework to include all and is broken down into several sections which have been slightly adapted from the ‘original’ lesson plan; open, modified, parallel, specific and disability. This framework allows the teacher to plan an inclusive lesson for all students. The IS can be viewed in further detail in Table 1.

**Table 1: Inclusive Spectrum and Context**

IS Section	Description	Teaching Context (PE examples)	Teaching Context (non-PE examples)
<b>Open</b>	Only minor adaptations are needed (if at all) as all considerations of inclusion have been thought of/ adapted.	Have all adaptations ready to apply from the outset (e.g. different equipment may be utilized (different heights/ weights/ sizes) so the activity is accessible and purely part of the lesson).	Have a variety of handouts, accessible materials in situ that will suit the group.
<b>Modified</b>	Based on the Haskin’s STEP Principle [8] of changing the Space, Task, Equipment and People to differentiate the activity so all can be challenged.	Space – Make the activity space larger/smaller. Move students closer/further away. Task – variety of choices that leads to the same learning outcome.	Consider where you sit and how you sit/place the children (space), can you vary the task to match the ability, can you change any

		Equipment – change size of implements, allow choice of items. People – encourage students to work with others.	equipment to allow the disabled child to engage in a different more accessible way (e.g. using a specific computer, interactive board), vary the people the disabled child works with.
<b>Parallel</b>	Simultaneous activities alongside each other.	If shooting a basketball is the learning activity in a small sided game (3v3), use floor hoops for one activity, floor baskets on the next court, a suspended hoop from a basket on the third, and a basketball hoop with a backboard on the 4th.	Have slightly different tasks on a table that reach the same learning outcome.
<b>Specific</b>	An activity where the student with an impairment may be selected to do a particular purposeful activity alone or with someone to hone a skill.	One to one catching with a teaching assistant to practice a set boccia move.	Provide a challenge task card so one or a small group of children can focus on.
<b>Disability</b>	An opportunity to showcase a specific disability sport or use reverse integration in a largely non-disabled class.	Boccia, new age kurling, goalball, blind football, inclusive zone basketball, wheelchair basketball, etc.	Teach a portion of the lesson without using your voice so non-disabled children can simulate hearing loss for a short time.

The IS is merely a foundational tool for shaping inclusive practice, and much more can be achieved through expansion. Indeed, Foster and Barber [9] used the IS as a foundation but created an overlay with The Inclusive Planning Process (IPP).

The IPP has six stages to enhance true inclusion: ‘content’, ‘consultation and communicate’; ‘consider’, ‘construct’, ‘complete’ and ‘conclude’. To explain, when the PE teacher decides on a lesson place and knows who may be in their class (content), they ‘consult and communicate’ with the student with an impairment regarding how best to support them. This may not necessarily need to happen for every lesson. The teacher decides, using the IS, how best to include the student purposefully in the lesson (‘consider’), then ‘constructs’ and ‘completes’ the lesson with desired adaptations. To ‘conclude’, the teacher reflects on the process learning outcomes achieved or not achieved within the lesson.

### **Embodying being an ally in wider practice**

One could argue that the teacher becomes an ally by going *beyond* the IS to work alongside the disabled student or on their behalf to facilitate equitable treatment, whether the students knows it or not. For instance, if discriminatory language was heard within the lesson or staff room, the teacher would advocate that language as inappropriate and suggest more empowering terminology. Or, if a disabled student was excluded from a practical lesson because there was no additional teaching support, the allied teacher would address this with senior leaders and campaign for a more inclusive practice.

Figure 1 outlines three ways in which an allied role can be embodied within a PE setting, within a whole school setting, and a wider community setting.

**Figure 1: Being an ally in practice.**

PE Setting	School Setting	Wider Community Setting
Ensure the disabled student is included and address imbalances if excluded from an activity.	If you notice a disabled student is not getting the correct support in class, speak to necessary staff members.	Be mindful and aware of in-equalities in wider society.
Ask the student if they are being challenged and encourage them to use their voice.	Address discriminatory language heard in the teaching environment.	Encourage people to use more inclusive, affirming disability language.
Check the student can access the teaching area.	Ensure entrances to buildings are accessible for all students (and parents at parent/open evenings).	Recognise there is bias against disabled people and privilege in favour of the non-disabled population.
Educate non-disabled students about the importance of safety (e.g. if they see hazards such as a cone, or clothing, place this out of the way).	Respect any parental impairments, provide accessible resources (BSL, large font).	Raise awareness of disability issues to others less knowledgeable.
Ensure PE equipment has been ordered and accessible to use.	Ensure school trips are accessible for all students.	Affirm that social barriers are real, not the fault of the disabled person.

In conclusion, this article suggests a potential blueprint to provide an integrated AND inclusive high-quality PE lesson for disabled students. We suggest but one way to incorporate this, (through the IS and the IPP) and encourage teachers to use their own skills to craft an inclusive PE environment.

We highlight the power of allyship within the context of PE and the wider community in creating an equitable and empowering learning environment for students with an impairment.

## References

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