The team approach is designed to help each student with a disability to realize their health, fitness and physical activity goals. A case study is presented, involving one student with a disability.

Creating a Collaborative Team

When a team is created, it is focused on understanding the physical activity goals of the student, including health or fitness objectives. A team typically includes:

- the student;
- a physical education teacher;
- an adapted physical activity consultant; and
- the student’s parents.

From the outset, the team has to be focused on clear communications. This involves regular meetings, documentation of approaches and objectives, and listening to each other. All of these efforts help to build strong teams.

As an adapted physical activity consultant working in the community, I often find myself working as part of a collaborative team. In the school environment, a team approach can greatly facilitate the development of an effective, individualized, adapted physical activity plan for each student with a disability.

This article outlines how adapted physical activity consultants can lead or co-lead the creation and use of collaborative teams in school environments, in support of persons with disabilities. It also discusses some of the roles of each team member and offers best practices and other ideas to help the team work together.
relationships and resolve issues or problems that may arise.

**About Inclusiveness**

Underlying all of the efforts of a collaborative team is a common drive towards inclusiveness. In many cases, the personalized physical activity plan promotes or requires inclusive practices in various activities and environments in the school and community, and at home.

Children and youth with disabilities enjoy physical activity and want to be involved alongside their classmates without disabilities. Metaphorically, inclusive physical education can provide a sense of belonging, social acceptance, and the opportunity to enjoy companionship of friends. The knowledge they gain about performing different activities supports their skillful participation and provides the opportunity to demonstrate their physical competence (Goodwin, 2009).

**Roles of Team Members**

The role of each team member is briefly described below.

**Adapted Physical Activity Consultant**

Adapted physical activity (APA) is a professional branch within kinesiology/physical education/sport and human movement sciences. APA consultants work with individuals with disabilities in a wide range of one-on-one or group instructional settings.

Consultants typically work with their clients on such matters as body awareness, motor skills, sporting activities, life skills and other actions or goals that may involve fitness training, development of new skills, adaptations or physical challenges.

**Student**

Notably, a student with disability who is included in the process of developing his or her education program is more likely to be committed and motivated to work on specific program goals (Block, 2007). Student involvement on the team is essential; team members should actively seek and listen to student inputs at all stages.

**Physical Education Teacher**

In Alberta, one of the stated goals of the provincial physical education curriculum is to “enable individuals to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to lead an active and healthy lifestyle.”

In support of this goal, physical education teachers are required to work with all students, in various classes or settings, to help each student develop different skills, such as body awareness, motor skills, various sport skills, and life skills.

**Parents**

Within the team approach, parents should be encouraged to share their goals and expectations for their child. This can help the physical education teacher and the APA consultant to individualize and personalize a program to meet the unique needs of the student.

**Personalized Plans, Inclusive Practices and Rule Modifications**

The personalized plan should be set up to ensure the student gets a chance to practice their skills in various environments. The physical education teacher and the adapted physical activity consultant should advise the team about inclusive strategies, such as modifying individual or group physical activities.

For instance a common way to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities is to make modifications to rules or equipment for various games or activities.

**Rule Modifications**

- softball: allow the student to hit the ball off a tee, or let the student use a larger bat
- volleyball: let the student stand closer when serving the ball
- basketball: require all players to touch the ball one time before shooting the ball at the net
- other games: encourage non-disabled students to create modified rules that will be fair for everyone including students with disabilities, e.g., give extra
strikes in softball, or have the pitcher stand closer to the player and pitch the ball slower.

**Equipment Modifications**

Students with disabilities should be encouraged to choose equipment that they are more comfortable with, such as a beach ball instead of a volleyball. Or, in some cases, they can choose equipment that interests them, e.g., football, frisbee, rubber chicken, or bean bag (Lockwood, 2010).

Here is an example of a teacher who understands the instructional parameters of inclusion and knows how to contribute to student success, for all students.

A teacher offers three different types of volleyball games:

- one volleyball game is played with regulation rules;
- a second option allows children to use a volleyball trainer and stand closer when serving;
- a third game uses a lower net and encourages a cooperative team game rather than a competitive focus to each match.

In another example, lacrosse is the chosen game:

- Students get to choose their starting point in a lacrosse circuit.
- As students master the skill at each station, they move to the next level of difficulty.
- As a result, each student works on developing the same basic skills, but at their own pace.
- The first station may involve cradling the ball in the webbing of a lacrosse stick while traveling in a straight line. The second may involve cradling between pylons and the third may require students to move around a defender. (Lockwood, 2010)

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**Case Study Highlights: Grade 5 student participating in school physical education and a community-based physical activity program (Free2BMe)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Male, age 10, elementary school physical education student, Grade 5.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Developmental coordination disorder, fine motor delays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Members</td>
<td>Adapted physical activity consultant, physical education teacher, parents, student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Program</td>
<td>Free2BMe: includes 1:1 Motor Skill Development for 3 years. (Free2BMe is a specialized community program located at the University of Alberta which provides direct motor skill development and fitness sessions for children and youth with physical, developmental and sensory disabilities.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Activity Interests</td>
<td>Enjoys playing sports including soccer and hockey. Also participates in lifetime leisure skills which include a bike riding club and swimming lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Program Goal</td>
<td>Improve physical education sport skills in school to increase mark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Strategies</td>
<td>Community consultant, parent and teacher communicated by e-mails and in-person meetings. Written documentation of physical activity goals was kept in a shared binder. Rubric checklists were used and transferred back and forth from the community, home and school environments. As a result, a personalized profile was created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Quote</td>
<td>“Our son is more confident in everything he does. He can do new things like climb up with both feet, use a hand-cycle and follow the rules of games, such as badminton, hockey and basketball. The APA consultant connected with our son’s school PE teacher and consequently, his second term marks in physical education were much better than in first term. We are very pleased with his progress.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

October 2010
Case Study: Personalized Profile Showing Positive Team Communications

In addition to any inclusive physical education activities experienced by a student at school, it’s also helpful to encourage the student to participate in community programming year-round. This extra time can help to further develop the student’s fundamental motor skills and fitness.

The case study highlights on the preceding page show how a team approach to communications and collaborations can contribute to student success, as related to health and physical activity objectives.

Benefits of Inclusive Physical Education

Some of the benefits of inclusive physical education for students with and without disabilities include:

- opportunity for all students to interact with each other and learn appropriate and new social skills in integrated environments
- students with a disability are able to participate in more stimulating and motivating environments, and gain health benefits from increased physical activity
- potential for all students to develop new friendships with peers

In my experience, the most effective and meaningful personalized profiles are best created by communicating often with all team members and sharing ideas.

When developing personalized plans, professionals can share health goals and strategies to address individual student needs and interests. It also helps to consistently communicate with each other about how student success can be achieved, while working hand-in-hand with students and their parents. With a team approach in place, each student with a disability can experience inclusive physical activities, develop new skills and friendships, and meet their personal goals.

Beth Arbuckle works in Nova Scotia as an Adapted Physical Activity consultant. She wrote this article while working as a Team Leader for The Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement at the University of Alberta.

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Mission Statement of the Alberta Centre for Active Living

Working with practitioners, organizations, and communities to improve the health and quality of life of all people through physical activity.

WellSpring is published six times a year.
ISSN 1187-7472

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