

SECTION 17

**inclusion
matters!**



Extracurricular Participation (Nonacademic Study)

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Section Six, Least Restrictive Environment, Part E, Nonacademic Study, of the General Assurance Document of the Missouri State Plan for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) addresses the issue of extra-curricular participation for students with disabilities — “The component school district assures as a matter of joint compliance that each student with a disability participates with students without disabilities in those nonacademic and extra-curricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the student with a disability.”

In addition, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) published a Dear Colleague letter on January 25, 2013 that Students with disabilities have the right, under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, to an equal opportunity to participate in their schools' extracurricular activities. A 2010 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that many students with disabilities are not afforded an equal opportunity to participate in athletics, and therefore may not have equitable access to the health and social benefits of athletic participation. “Sports can provide invaluable lessons in discipline, selflessness, passion and courage, and this guidance will help schools ensure that students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to benefit from the life lessons they can learn on the playing field or on the court,” said Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

Finally, the positive effects of Extra-Curricular Participation for the long term outcomes of students include:

- Cultivate and develop life-long vocational and avocational skills;
- Develop students' competencies in academic, social, vocational, recreational realms;
- Develop a student's sense of self-esteem and self-worth by being accepted as a member of a group
- Promotes physical and social well-being;
- Develop skills in choice making and self-determination;
- Develop social and leisure skills that can aid the transition to adulthood and community living;
- Develop friendships with peers throughout the school environment who share similar interests;
- Serve as an avenue to counteract the tendency for students in special education to interact predominately with adults during the school day due to use of aides and additional adult presence in the self-contained classroom (staff, therapists, job coaches);
- Foster a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school and community; and
- Increase awareness and sensitivity to disability issues within the greater school community

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Extracurricular Participation (Nonacademic Study)

What should you consider when choosing a focus for an after-school inclusive club?

- 1) **Age & desirability** – Be sure to offer activities and programs that are viewed as “cool”, “attractive”, “interesting” by adolescents.
- 2) **Student interests and needs** – Include youth with and without disabilities in discussions about club focus. Discuss their interests and desires for new extracurricular clubs (possible ideas include a video/technology/gaming club, cooking club, gardening club, guitar club, animal care club, arts and crafts club, board game club, community service club).
- 3) **Ownership and ongoing engagement** – Continue to welcome student and staff comments about the clubs’ ongoing structure, focus, and format. This involvement fosters a sense of ownership and investment among club participants.
- 4) **Fun & interaction** – Be sure to maintain an atmosphere that is fun and interactive to ensure meaningful participation from all club members

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Options for extra-curricular activities may be identified through an environmental inventory. Steps for planning for successful participation in the identified activities may include some or all of the following:

- _____ Inventory student’s interests
- _____ Determine extracurricular activity
- _____ Determine support required for student participation
- _____ Arrange for transportation to and from activity
- _____ Provide ability awareness and training for other activity participants
- _____ Provide training for the adult sponsor
- _____ Plan for on-going support
- _____ Determine costs involved
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Home » [Parents/ Teachers](#) » [Inclusive extracurricular programs: Tips and Resources](#)

Inclusive extracurricular programs: Tips and Resources

Why advocate for inclusive after-school recreation clubs?



Schools are one of the most powerful institutions for socialization within the community and a natural environment for breaking down barriers and increasing acceptance of persons who have previously been viewed within their communities as "different". (Abery, Schoeller, Simunds, Gaylord & Fahnestock, 1997). Adolescents spend large portions of their day involved in after-school extracurricular activities and/or community-based recreation pursuits (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993). All of these activities, ranging from highly structured school- or community-sponsored activities (e.g., competitive sports teams) to relatively unstructured pursuits (e.g., watching television, hanging out at the mall), have a profound effect on the adolescent's

development and adjustment to adulthood (Larson & Kleiber, 1993). Unfortunately for adolescents with developmental disabilities, involvement in extracurricular activities and community-based recreation is limited. Most of the research examining the leisure patterns of youth with developmental disabilities indicated that recreation and leisure involvement typically involves solitary, passive activities that are family rather than peer oriented and segregated (Buttimer & Tierney, 2005, Hodge & Dattillo, 1995). Because of this, it is important for parents and teachers to advocate for inclusive after-school recreation clubs and other activities. Such advocacy increases the chance that students with disabilities will acquire socialization skills and be fully engaged in the school community. Such clubs and activities also create a climate within the school in which individual differences are accepted and supported.

Inclusive afterschool clubs can

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- Increase awareness and sensitivity to disability issues within the greater school community



"I'm really thankful for video club. I like to see people who you normally don't see and say 'hey'. Everyone is very friendly. You get a different perspective and you get a better chance to understand each other."

-Penn Wood High Student-

Parents/ Teachers

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Who are the key players/stakeholders that can help you achieve an inclusive after-school club?



Inclusion does not happen automatically nor is it easily sustained without communication, cooperation and collaboration between the myriad stakeholders. When creating an inclusive after-school recreation club, it is useful to create a collaborative planning group within the greater school community. This helps to ensure an increased commitment to the goals of the club and advocates for a fuller recognition of the importance of creating full inclusion in all school-sponsored recreation activities. Most importantly, those involved in creating an afterschool inclusive club must have a commitment to serve all youth, regardless of ability. This commitment should be communicated, clearly, sincerely and repeatedly. Possible members for a planning group include:

- Students with and without disabilities
- Regular and Special Education teachers
- Teachers who are currently sponsoring after-school clubs and team activities
- School Administration (principal, superintendent, school board members)
- Parents
- Recreation therapists
- Representatives from a local university, ideally one that houses a Therapeutic Recreation program - in Eastern Delaware County Temple University has such a program.

What are the mechanisms for funding an inclusive after-school club?

Costs for afterschool inclusion clubs are not extensive. In fact, many schools can achieve inclusive after-school experiences without any additional costs. A careful assessment and action plan to make existing clubs and activities more fully inclusive and welcoming may be all that is needed. If you decide to start a new club, you will incur the most costs for the purchase of equipment, paying of club proctors and, if needed, door-to-door transportation for students requiring such services. Inclusive afterschool activities are a cost-efficient mechanism to assure that all students in your school have an opportunity to meaningfully participate. Some possible strategies for funding such endeavors include:

- Hiring a consultant to assess and develop strategies that facilitate the meaningful participation of all students in after-school activities and club
- Seeking financial support from the School District/Intermediate Unit in the same manner that other after-school clubs are funded
- Seeking external resources/grants (e.g., inclusion-focused grants from non-profit foundations)
- Creating a partnership with local recreation service providers sharing facilities/equipment/or staffing to make the program a reality
- Hosting a donation drive for discarded games/equipment
- Using club activity to fund-raise (i.e., Sell tickets to "The Wii Tournament")



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- **Ownership and ongoing engagement** - Continue to welcome student and staff comments about the clubs' ongoing structure, focus, and format. This involvement fosters a sense of ownership and investment among club participants.
- **Fun & interaction** – Be sure to maintain an atmosphere that is fun and interactive to ensure meaningful participation from all club members.

Usually when I go home, I have nothing to do and just go to sleep. I like coming to Video Club- it's fun. It's nice to have something to do. I feel very excited when I know it's going to be Video Club! I come to Video Club because it's fun! I love to sit here and play video games. It's very valuable...What could be better about Video Club? Well, I'm not so sure anything could be better..."

-Penn Wood High Student-

What resources are needed to have an inclusive afterschool club?

Space:

Space considerations are important in the planning of the club. Deciding where the club will be held is a simple but important issue. The size and location of the room needs to be conducive to the population of students. For example, providing a chance for special education students to attend the club in an area of the school that they may not have an opportunity to go to during a regular school day may help to create a more "normalized" environment for them. Access to electrical outlets and storage space for equipment must also be a determining factor in your location decision.

Equipment:

Purchasing club supplies that ensure safety and durability is a prime consideration when planning for any club. For example, when we purchased video game club equipment in our pilot club, we made certain that it would be sturdy and secure. This included acquiring television stands/carts so that the television sets could be mounted and bolted to deter instability of the equipment thereby reducing the risk of student injury and/or damage to video/electronic devices. A bit of planning on the front end facilitates the safety of club participants and the longevity of any equipment you purchase.

Make sure games and equipment you purchase are age and subject matter appropriate. For example, Dora the Explorer is not appropriate for 15 year olds and violence-themed games are not appropriate for school settings. Possible appropriate video games that worked for our pilot high-school clubs include: Guitar Hero: World Tour, Rock Band, Wii Sports Pac, Wii Play, Mario Kart Wii, Super Smash Brothers, NBA Ballers (Playstations3/Xbox 360),



Maintenance of equipment is very important to ensure the equipments' longevity. When possible, use rechargeable batteries and make sure they are fully charged prior to the club sessions. Ensure a safe storage space that is large enough to contain all the accumulated equipment.

Security against theft of expensive or popular equipment is important. Make sure the equipment can be locked in a secure location, which is not accessible to others in the building.

Transportation:

How will students return home after the club? This is a barrier that may hinder special needs students' participation in the club, especially if they receive special transportation through their Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Obtaining administrative support and working with transportation officials to set up a specific plan for getting students home safely is an essential part of the club development process. Engaging parents in the planning process is also important, as they may be able to help resolve transportation issues via car-pools or designating "walk-home" buddies.

Personnel (School personnel and contracted employees):

School Personnel: Staffing the club should involve school personnel who are familiar with the students, especially the

special education students. Involving regular education teachers is sometimes useful in enticing general education students to join. Ideally, club proctor(s) should have a(n)...

- Willingness to commit to the club and students' needs;
- Familiarity with students and/or special needs of the population of students;
- Understanding of specific disability areas (ASD, MR, etc.); and,
- Familiarity with ways to adapt activities or equipment to promote independence during the club.



Contracted Employees (e.g., Recreation Therapists): Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (CTRS®) are an important addition in the planning and initial implementation phases of an inclusive after-school club, as they are experienced in creating inclusive leisure environments. In addition, they are skilled at structuring game play, facilitating interactions in non-structured environments, encouraging the development of leisure interests/skills, and are knowledgeable about adapted recreation equipment, modifying recreation activities and creating inclusive recreation environments. Consider contracting with recreation therapists on an as-needed basis to assure your inclusive after-school club's success. The American Therapeutic Recreation Association (www.atra-tr.org) or your local state therapeutic recreation organization can assist you in contacting recreation therapists in your geographic region.

What is the most important thing to make the club successful?



One important consideration is to create an environment where all club participants have an equal status relationship. Equal status relationships between students with and without disabilities will be more likely to produce positive outcomes. These equal status relationships should occur under natural and voluntary conditions, foster the view of a person with a disability as an individual rather than a member of a disability group, revolve around shared or common interests/goals, and emphasize cooperation vs. competition. Critical to the success of any after-school club is assuring that students feel welcomed and safe and that they have a sense of club ownership. To accomplish this in an after-school club, be sure to....

- Offer students, especially special education students, a leadership role in the club such as being responsible for marketing the club to their peers, equipment set up/clean up, time keeping, making sure all students are signed in, recruiting new members, club photography, or writing a club newsletter.
- Create an environment where students with and without disabilities have the opportunity for natural interactions and engagements.

I like to play the Wii! I love playing video games. The club is something fun and it's not sitting at home on the computer or watching TV by myself. It's nice to be around other people."

- Penn Wood High Student -

Other Helpful Hints that promote success:

1. Hold training sessions as needed for youth with disabilities so that when they join the club they have the pre-requisite skills to participate fully.
2. Focus on students' similarities, rather than differences (i.e., 'We are all high school kids and we all like playing video games.')
3. Emphasize students' strengths, rather than limitations (i.e., 'Renee is very caring versus' versus 'Renee has inappropriate social behavior'.)
4. Encourage respectful communication and person first language. Avoid labeling people as part of a disability group.
5. Structure the club's physical space so that it is accessible and allows for freedom of movement and social gathering spots.
6. Make sure any equipment modifications and assistive technology is available in order to best meet the needs of all club participants.

7. Structure the club's activities so that teamwork and natural interactions and collaborations occur among youth with and without disabilities.
8. In the case of a challenging behavior, ensure that the proper structures are in place and the guidance in managing the behavior.
9. Consider using a recreation therapist. Recreation therapists are particularly helpful in structuring activities to promote inclusion (e.g., team formation strategies, highest points club challenges, tournament play.)

Want to learn more about how to implement effective Inclusion practices?

Visit these great websites for more information:

- http://www.includingallkids.org/pdfs/GUIDING_PRACTICES_FOR_INCLUSION.pdf

A helpful resource guide by the Boys and Girls Club of America

- <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/cedir/kidsWeb/booknook/bookvi.html>

An inclusion bibliotherapy project from Center for Disability Information and Referral from Indiana University

- <http://www.kidsource.com/NICHCY/Literature.html>

An inclusion bibliotherapy project by Kids Source Online

- <http://www.loc.gov/nls/reference/bibliographies/awareness.html>

Includes links to online resources about promoting an inclusive school/classroom

- https://www.dvusd.org/assets/pdfs/department_education/Disability_Awareness.pdf

A disability awareness activity packet compiled by Bev Adcock and Michael L. Remus

- www.teachingtolerance.org

An online resource for promoting an inclusive and tolerant school community

- <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/3413936/A-Community-For-All-Children-A-Guide-to-Inclusion-for>

A guide to inclusion for out of school time by Kimberly Miller and Stuart Schleien

- <http://ici.umn.edu/yesican/program/default.html>

A resource guide about inclusive recreational and social activities for youth from the University of Minnesota

Remember - Being part of a community is important for any person of

any age of any ability!! Wii all need friends!

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Download a written verioson of this [Toolkit](#) with pictures here.

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Extracurricular Activities – Environmental Inventory

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Recreation/Leisure Resource Center



The Recreation Council of Greater St. Louis

“Advocating for Recreation/Leisure Choices for Individuals with disABILITIES”

Leisure and Recreation Information for Persons of ALL Abilities!

The Recreation Resource Center offers its visitors a variety of articles, books, program brochures, magazines and videos on various recreation and leisure topics and interests! Let the Recreation Council help you explore your interests and learn about the many opportunities that exist in your community, in your state and other parts of the United States! A few examples of the information you will find in the Center include, but not limited to, the following:

Camp Programs

Sports & Recreation Programs

Arts

Horseback Riding

Adventure Programs

Travel

Fishing

St. Louis Area Attractions

Inclusive Recreation

Gardening

Equipment Catalogs

Exercise & Fitness

Accessible Parks and Camp Sites

Americans with Disabilities Act Guidelines

The Center also offers adaptive recreation equipment such as a self-casting fishing rod/reel, a camera mount, a bowling ramp, an all-terrain chair, modified golf clubs, large print playing cards and holders, and more! The Council also has a Cycle & Golf Cart program! Call us to find out where you can use the accessible cycles and golf carts.

All materials and equipment are loaned out on a two-week basis, at no charge! The Recreation Council welcomes you to visit our Resource Center, or call us, and we can make arrangements to get you the information you are seeking!

The Recreation Council’s Resource Center is located at:

200 South Hanley Road, Suite 100

St. Louis, Missouri 63105

For More Information, or to Schedule an Appointment to

Visit the Resource Center, Call

(314) 726-6044

www.recreationcouncil.org

