IPAP Part 2

Throughout my experience with the Centre County Special Olympics program, I was able to develop my teaching skills in an adapted physical education setting, while interacting with an outstanding group of individuals! During the first practice session, I immediately began developing relationships with the athletes and coaches. This allowed me to identify the skill levels and learning styles for many of the athletes in the program. It was clear that all athletes were going to be faced with challenges throughout the program; however, each individual athlete was able to overcome multiple barriers over this ten-week period.

Over the course of these last ten weeks, I was able to work with all of the athletes for a variety of track and field activities. By the third week, I was well aware of each individual’s disability, his or her physical skill level, and the degree of assistance that he or she required for each activity. Although I was given the opportunity to work with all of the athletes, there was one individual who I spent time with most. During each session, I worked individually with a 19 year-old athlete named Alex. Alex is one of the many athletes in the Special Olympics program with Down Syndrome. After getting to know Alex, I developed a number of goals and objectives that I wanted him to reach by the end of the program. Due to Alex’s high level of motivation and strong work ethic, he was able to reach all of these goals and much more!

One specific activity that I designed to help Alex with his throwing technique and accuracy was “Turbo Toss.” After spending weeks working on throwing form for the turbo javelin and softball throw, this activity challenged Alex to throw with accuracy. When creating this lesson plan, I wanted to place more emphasis on the importance of throwing for accuracy rather than distance. Throughout each practice session, Alex was highly successful with throwing for distance; however, he would often throw outside of the landing zone that would be used in competition. For the “Turbo Toss” activity, I placed targets on the ground within the landing zone. Alex’s initial reaction to the targets was funny because he was so used to throwing as far as he could without accuracy; however, he responded well because of the challenge the activity presented.

At the beginning of the lesson, I had Alex complete a few warm-up throws and get his technique down. Following this, I had Alex choose on target in the throwing zone and aim for it for all five throws. I set the targets up within is average throwing distance, so he was not changing his throwing form. I was actually very impressed with Alex’s initial success, as he hit the target two out of the five throws! In order to increase the difficulty of the activity, I introduced the challenge of hitting the target three out of five attempts, one of the objectives for the lesson. Although Alex did not achieve this objective immediately, he remained engaged until he finally hit the same target three times!

I feel as though this was a great lesson for Alex, as well as the other athletes who were practicing their throwing. I had some of the athletes work on throwing for distance by marking their farthest throws with cones, and others working on accuracy just like Alex. This lesson not only introduced throwing accuracy to the athletes but some of the rules for the turbo javelin throw, which incorporated some cognitive skills as well!

Overall, I feel as though the “Turbo Toss” lesson and all of the other activities in the Special Olympics practices have been very effective for enhancing the ability levels of all athletes. If I were to teach the “Turbo Toss” lesson again, I would have different sized targets rather than all the same size. In addition, I would use heavier or lighter turbo javelins to help the athletes become more successful during the activity. Along with this, I realized this lesson could be taught to a general physical education class with adapted students because the turbo javelin can be used to develop the throwing technique for students of all ability levels.

As I plan to continue attending the Special Olympics sessions after this semester, I look forward to creating more activities that cater to all of the athletes in the program. This has been such a unique experience for me because I receive direct feedback on my ability to teach students of a variety of ability levels. In addition, the athletes at the Special Olympics have taught me that anything can be accomplished if you work hard at it! These athletes face numerous struggles daily, yet they continue to do their best every day and achieve success because of this!

Reference: Special Equipment

<http://www.turbojav.com/special-olympics>: Variety of Turbo Javelins, targets, other accessories.