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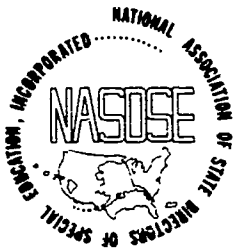
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ABSTRACT

This bulletin highlights the proceedings of an Action Seminar on Physical Education and Sports for Students with Disabilities, sponsored by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). The seminar explored barriers that hinder children with disabilities from participating in appropriate school physical education programs and recommended strategies to seek solutions to the situation. The goal, belief statements, and long-term objectives of the seminar are outlined. Barriers that were identified included such factors as failure to accept the philosophy of full integration and failure of Individualized Education Programs to reflect the need for physical education services. Early intervention is viewed as the key to maximum benefits of physical education. General guidelines are offered for qualification of personnel who can provide physical education services to students with disabilities, and the issue of certification is discussed. Several model programs are described. Strategies for action are then presented, grouped according to organizational responsibility, including NASDSE, the National Consortium on Physical Education and Recreation for the Handicapped, Special Olympics International, the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education, institutions of higher education, state and local education agencies, and parent advocacy groups. Sections of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that relate to physical education and athletics are printed, with comments. (JDD)

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## Physical Education and Sports: The Unfulfilled Promise for Students with Disabilities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act includes "instruction in physical education" as part of the definition of special education. The reality is, however, that appropriate physical education for students with disabilities, taught by qualified professionals, is rarely found in public schools across the country.

Research and experience demonstrate that students with disabilities have marked deficits in physical fitness and motor skills. Evidence also shows that physical fitness and motor skills can be improved through appropriate programs and can lead to learning lifetime sport skills that maintain health and allow participation in community recreation and sports programs.

One key obstacle is that not all states have defined who is qualified to provide physical education for students with disabilities. As a result, there are few, if any, standards for quality programs, and too often personnel providing physical education services to students with disabilities are poorly trained or are even unqualified. Also, there are few opportunities for students with disabilities to take part in after-school sports programs.

### Action Seminar Identifies Practices that Create Barriers

A recent NASDSE Action Seminar on Physical Education and Sports for Students with Disabilities explored barriers that hinder children with disabilities from participating in appropriate school physical education programs and recommended strategies to seek solutions to the situation.

Participants included representatives of the federal government, the National Consortium on Physical Education and Recreation for the Handicapped, state and local education agencies, The Council for Exceptional Children,

institutes of higher education, secondary schools, physical education, parent groups, NASDSE and Special Olympics International.

The following practices were identified during the seminar to have created obstacles to ensuring that all children with disabilities participate in appropriate school physical education programs and in school and community sports programs

- The public education system has not accepted the philosophy of full integration of persons with disabilities into physical education and sports or the concept of a full array of physical education and sports programming for students with disabilities.
- Schools do not place students in the most appropriate, least restrictive environment for physical education, tending to place students in programs that are available rather than what is needed.
- The traditional curriculum and time allocation for physical education for students with disabilities in many cases is inadequate to meet their needs.
- Placement in physical education is not monitored by school districts; and IEPs do not reflect the need for physical education services or the specific instructional services to be provided.
- Standards that define quality programs of physical education and sports for persons with disabilities or the competence and qualifications of personnel to teach those programs are either inadequate or do not exist.
- Sports opportunities are lacking at the post-secondary level for persons with disabilities, and students

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## Action Seminar on Physical Education and Sports for Students with Disabilities

### Goal

To ensure that all children with disabilities participate in appropriate school physical education programs and have the opportunity to participate in school and community sports programs.

### Belief Statements

- All children with disabilities can benefit from physical activity.
- Development of physical fitness and motor performance skills are necessary for healthy lifestyle and integration into the community.
- The skills of teamwork, cooperation and competition are necessary for gainful employment and can be learned and reinforced through sports participation.
- Physical activity is an avenue for developing friendships and common interests between people with and without disabilities.

### Objectives by the Year 2000

- All students with disabilities will participate in appropriately designed physical education.
- The functional physical fitness and motor skill levels of students with disabilities will improve.
- The supply of qualified adapted physical education teachers will meet the demand.
- Sports and fitness opportunities for students with disabilities will be available in every school and in every community.
- Sports and fitness programs for adults with disabilities will be available in every community.
- All exiting students with disabilities will transition into community sports and fitness programs.

are not transitioned appropriately within the school day, across the school program, after the school year, or after completing the school program.

- Personnel in early childhood programs are not aware of the importance of physical education can have in early intervention services and do not include physical education staff in a multidisciplinary approach.
- Physical education curricula at the higher education level do not prepare people to work with infants and toddlers.
- Information is not communicated to the general public about the benefits of early intervention programs and their effects on physical and motor development.
- Lack of support by decision makers toward infant and toddler programs prevents school districts from implementing early intervention activities that could avoid more costly expenditures later on in the education program.
- Physical educators and others are unaware of the multitude of sports programs available throughout the community.
- Sports organizations for persons with disabilities do not coordinate their activities.
- National professional groups and organizations do not collaborate or coordinate their services.
- Many parents, teachers and administrators do not understand the difference between and the benefits associated with physical education, sports/athletics, and related services such as occupational and physical therapy.
- School districts facing major cutbacks often eliminate elementary and sometimes even secondary physical education programs.

### Early Intervention is Key to Maximum Benefits of Physical Education

The goal of physical education is to develop lifetime fitness and sport skills that can be used to maintain one's health and allow one to participate in recreational activities. Learning lifetime sport skills depends on physical fitness, motor skills, and knowledge of concepts. Physical education is not just physical fitness, fundamental motor skills, and learning to play games. It is a highly complex process that requires detailed planning, constant assessment, explicit instruction, and numerous practice trials.

Research studies have clearly established that students with disabilities have marked deficits in both physical

fitness and motor skills such as throwing, catching and jumping. Research on all disability groups shows that they are behind nondisabled persons in acquiring motor skills. A consistent trend has been that deficits increase with the severity of the disability.

One benefit of developing physical fitness and motor skills is to reduce health risks, particularly for coronary heart disease. Numerous studies on intervention have found consistently that both fitness and motor skill deficits can be reduced with appropriate instructional programs. To achieve this, there must be qualified instructors, appropriate programs and curricula, and transition plans.

Part H and Title I programs can be used to start adapted physical education for infants, toddlers and preschool children. We need to know as much as we can about full development and intervention at an early age. That is an opportune time for adapted physical education to provide skills and to relate to the family.

Early intervention is a key. It is obviously much more difficult to start with children who already have marked

developmental deficits. The greater the failure history, the harder it becomes to motivate the learner to perform the thousands of practice trials needed to develop physical fitness and motor skills.

Physical education time must be used to teach learners how the skill should be performed and why. Given the recognized delays and the slower learning rates of many students with disabilities, opportunities to practice must be planned and not left to chance. Specific transition plans are needed to guarantee that the students have opportunities during and after school and on weekends to work on their physical and motor skills.

Once students have developed a foundation of motor skills, they should then be encouraged to participate in local recreation and community youth sport programs. Long-term transition plans can help ensure that students with disabilities have the necessary skills and experiences to use community recreation and sports programs after their school years.

## What the Regulations Say about Physical Education and Athletics for Students with Disabilities

The regulations for IDEA say:

### Reg. 300.307 Physical Education.

(a) *General.* Physical education services, specially designed, if necessary, must be made available to every handicapped child receiving a free appropriate public education.

(b) *Regular physical education.* Each handicapped child must be afforded the opportunity to participate in the regular physical education program available to nonhandicapped children unless:

(1) The child is enrolled full time in a separate facility; or

(2) The child needs specially designed physical education as prescribed in the child's individualized education program.

(c) *Special physical education.* If specially designed physical education is prescribed in a child's individualized education program, the public agency responsible for the education of that child shall provide the services directly, or make arrangements for it to be provided through other public or private programs.

(d) *Education in separate facilities.* The public agency responsible for the education of a handicapped child who is enrolled in a separate facility shall insure that the child receives appropriate physical education services in compliance with paragraphs (a) and (c) of this section.

(20) U.S.C. 140(16); 1412 (5)(B), 1414(a)(6))

*Comment.* The Report of the House of Representatives on P.L. 94-142 includes the following statement regarding physical education:

Special Education as set forth in the Committee bill includes instruction in physical education, which is provided as a matter of course to all nonhandicapped children enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools. The Committee is concerned that although these services are available to and required of all children in our school systems, they are often viewed as a luxury for handicapped children.

The Committee expects the Commissioner of Education to take whatever action is necessary to assure that physical education services are available to all handicapped children; and has specifically included physical education within the definition of special education to make clear that the Committee expects such services, specially designed where necessary, to be provided as an integral part of the educational program of every handicapped child.

(House Report No. 94-332, p. 9 (1975))

### Nonacademic services.

The regulations (300.306) include athletics as a non-academic service and commands: "Each public agency shall take steps to provide nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities in such manner as is necessary to afford handicapped children an equal opportunity for participation in those services and activities."

## Who is Minding the Gymnasium?

*Apparently, no one! Federal and state special educators are not monitoring the quality or even the existence of physical education and sports services for students with disabilities. Physical education isn't monitoring adapted physical education either, preferring instead to leave it to special education since they are responsible for serving students with disabilities.*

*When it comes to physical education and sports, students with disabilities are a "forgotten population," and adapted physical education and sports are "orphan" programs.*

Patricia Krebs, Special Olympics International, Washington, D.C.

The IDEA recognized this need and expanded the term "related services" to include therapeutic recreation. Report language indicates that public school systems should make every effort to cooperate with public park and recreation systems and others, to employ and utilize therapeutic recreation professionals to evaluate, plan, and administer the recreation component of an individual's education plan.

## Seminar Proposes General Guidelines for Qualified Instructors

By failing to define the qualifications of who can provide physical education services, schools have met the letter of the law but not the intent of the law, through one of these ways:

- Allowing regular physical educators untrained in working with students with disabilities to provide physical education services;
- Inappropriately mainstreaming all children with disabilities into regular physical education classes, where many are integrated as score keepers, timers or bench sitters rather than as players;
- Certifying all classroom teachers untrained in the motor domain to teach physical education.

States should specify qualification standards for physical educators teaching students with disabilities. Following are some general guidelines for qualified instructors:

- Sound foundation in physical education, including anatomy, kinesiology, biomechanics, motor learning, motor development, psychology;

*We need to place students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment if we truly want to reduce their deficits and develop their physical and motor skills. All too often, physical education is used as a dumping ground, frequently for desired social objectives, when in fact, it is probably the worst social environment to place an individual who does not have the physical and motor skills to participate and be successful.*

Luke E. Kelly, Associate Professor, University of Virginia

- Knowledge of and experience with the unique motor, personal social, and learning attributes of students with disabilities;
- Competency-based training in
  - assessing physical and motor performance
  - designing long-term functional curricula
  - implementing effective instruction
  - evaluating student and program progress and effectiveness
  - being a member of a multidisciplinary team.

## The Missing Link - Certification in Adapted Physical Education

There is a renewed clamor for highly qualified professionals throughout the country in adapted physical education. The issue of certification of adapted physical educators continues to be debated. Advocates for certification say the creation of an adapted physical education certification would serve to provide consistency for the field, further the profession, and increase the number of knowledgeable advocates working to enhance the lives of students with disabilities.

*The need is great. Students deserve quality programs, and health and fitness are too vital to leave to chance. Parents expect quality services by quality professionals. The evidence is overwhelming that "qualified" personnel means some type of special qualifications.*

*Professionals need recognition through certification. This enhances their perception of self and the value of their services, allows for "equal" footing with other professionals, assures "equivalency" in training, and discourages the "self-anointed" status.*

John M. Dunn, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, Oregon State University

A handful of states do have certification or endorsement in adapted physical education. Requirements range from an additional six credits of course work to a comprehensive set of expected outcomes. The trend is toward more generic certification standards. But financial resources are limited, and small and/or rural districts are concerned about staffing.

### University Initiatives Increase Number of Adapted Physical Education Programs

Progress is being made. Doctoral and master's degree training programs in adapted physical education exist in many states, and a number of universities offer some form of advanced training. But the demand outstrips the supply. There also are preservice and inservice programs for practicing teachers.

One example of a university initiative is the Ability First Disabled Sports Program at California State University at Chico, which provides a continuum of adapted services. The program identified the need for opportunities for youth and young adults to explore alternative avenues for active sport involvement.

The result, which may serve as a model for the country in a few years, is Movement Unlimited Sports Camp, which provides a comprehensive wheelchair sports training program for youth with physical disabilities aged 8 to 18 on the Chico State campus for a week in June. The program includes team and individual sport instruction, practice sessions, and contacts with role models within the disabled population who have had successful athletic experiences. The camp provides a teacher practicum for graduate and undergraduate students seeking careers in adapted physical education and related fields. The experience helps individual campers develop confidence in their ability to live independently and improve socialization skills.

*Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, is trying to provide undergraduates with dual certification, offering adapted physical education as a minor matched to state requirements for certification. Project UPSPE (Undergraduate Program in Special Physical Education) includes a practicum with a special Nautilus lab for students in wheelchairs to remediate undergraduate education.*

Ron Davis, Ball State University

### Milwaukee, Los Angeles are Models for LEA Initiatives

Within the Milwaukee school system, there is a joint effort between physical education, athletics and special education to provide appropriate physical education placement and instruction for students with disabilities.

All students are integrated into the school system, with no self-contained classes, and physical education is provided for all students from early childhood to secondary, including persons with mild, severe, and profound disabilities.

All schools have an on-site physical education program as determined by adapted physical education, physical education, and special education specialists. Joint determination is made of each student with a disability's needs based on screening and evaluation, including motor development. A qualified adapted physical education specialist determines appropriate physical education needs based on assessment tests, and depending on student needs, may provide technical assistance to regular physical educators, teach mainstreamed classes, support students mainstreamed into regular physical education, or instruct students in adapted physical education classes.

*Many lives are changing in Milwaukee because of Special Olympics. Respect has developed and friendships formed. All athletes, both those with and without mental retardation - cheer on their teammates during competition. Nondisabled students have learned to respect differences in people. Students with mental retardation are learning to accept themselves, to be friends with their nondisabled peers, and to be proud of their achievements. Parents are learning these same lessons through their children, and all school groups have joined together to make this idea a reality.*

Judy Gibbons, Milwaukee Public Schools

In 1988, the Milwaukee Public Schools was the first LEA to develop a comprehensive school sports program for students with mental retardation alongside the existing school sports programs. Special Olympics sports have been established in every school. More than 600 elementary and secondary school athletes participate in school-based training and competition.

The departments of exceptional education, physical education, athletics, recreation, and curriculum instruction developed the program and share responsibilities and financial support. The Wisconsin state education agency provided seed money for the first three years. The program included coaches training schools and inservice training for physical education teachers. Students take part in aquatics, basketball, bowling, softball and track and field, with Special Olympics athletes integrated with nondisabled student-athletes.

University High School in Los Angeles initiated Special Olympics competitions as part of a community-based instruction program to help students with disabilities become functional members of society.

Harold Connolly, U.S. Chapters Director at Special Olympics International, is targeting major metropolitan areas to promote collaboration with the schools. His department is making grants to school districts and is developing sports skills guides and curricula. Special Olympics has initiated a Unified Sports concept, in and out of school to include persons with mental disabilities together with those without disabilities in sports programs.

*Benefits for the students are that they are part of us, our school, and we no longer look at them as different. They have increased self-image and pride, they are no longer isolated physically or socially. They make and keep new friends, and they have improved health and appearance.*

*Benefits for the rest of the school are peer coaching benefits with students modeling and improving their own skills. Staff are going to school-based management, concentrating on meeting the needs of the under-represented minorities. Parents are more involved and very supportive of the whole school program. We achieved an improved school climate at very little extra effort.*

Jack Moscovitz, Principal, University High School, Los Angeles, CA

### **Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania SEAs are Models for Leadership**

Wisconsin has provided funds for adapted physical education since 1975, and the state has adapted physical education certification. According to the State Director of Special Education, Victor Contrucci, the Wisconsin SEA monitors and enforces compliance of physical education for students with disabilities. Open communication with consumer advocates, cooperation with business and the private sector, and regular meetings with providers in the school districts including unions and district administrators, build support for the program.

State standards are not mandated, but LEAs cannot get all their state aid if they do not meet the standards. The requirements go beyond IDEA; all students have the right to the same standards. Special education auditors check to see if exceptional children get physical education, and regular auditors check to see if there is inclusion. The program works because of the state superintendent's commitment, financial support, assistance of regional people, and partnership with Special Olympics.

In Ohio, Frank New, Director of Special Education, created a position of consultant assigned to the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education to serve as a liaison in adapted physical education, to work with the physical

education program and promote awareness of needs of children with disabilities. Physical education is required for all students. Adapted physical education and Special Olympics go hand in hand and complement each other.

In Pennsylvania, the SEA's commitment to physical education and sports for students with disabilities is a high priority. Three sport teams in three school districts have students with and without disabilities on teams. Pennsylvania State Director James Tucker is seeking a vehicle to integrate more activities for the students.

*Professional organizations need to work together in areas based on commonality. NASDSE can facilitate the process through education to disseminate information. Other questions to consider are recognition of competencies and qualifications of service providers, how regular and special educators can gain competencies, possibly through an add-on certificate, and how to involve parents in the process.*

William Forbus, California State University at Chico

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## **Recommendations/ Strategies for Action**

The following recommendations from the Action Seminar suggest strategies for action to achieve the stated national goals are grouped according to organizational responsibility, including the three sponsoring organizations - NASDSE, the National Consortium on Physical Education and Recreation for the Handicapped (Consortium); Special Olympics International; the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education (OSEP); institutions of higher education (IHE); State and Local Education Agencies; and parent advocacy groups.

*Think creatively and innovatively and come up with alternative ways to solicit funds from the private sector, and to open up gyms and sports fields after school hours.*

*Find ways to bring different groups together, to link up with private agencies and organizations, corporations, service clubs and say that this is worthy of their support and invite them to invest in this.*

Arnold Schwarzenegger, Chair,  
President's Council on Physical Fitness

### **NASDSE should...**

- Establish a task force on materials and publications that pertain to physical education, recreation and athletics for students with disabilities.
  - review existing materials and publications and identify those needing adaptations, and/or develop new materials,
  - adapt and develop materials aimed at specific groups such as administrators, teachers, parents, etc., outlining rights, responsibilities, definitions of physical education, recreation and athletics and who is qualified to provide these services,
  - disseminate adapted and new materials to SEAs, national and state advocates, federally funded technical assistance and parent training centers
- Through the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, encourage students with disabilities to enter careers in adapted physical education, athletics and recreation and to pursue leadership positions at the national, state and local levels in these fields.
- Work with the U.S. Department of Education, in supporting the national educational reform movement, to establish that one criteria for selection of the 500 + "America 2000" schools shall be that students with disabilities receive appropriate physical education and extra-curricular athletics.
- Develop a liaison with early childhood service providers to establish intervention programs that include developmental, preventive, and adapted physical education in infants' and toddlers' programs.
- Provide information to parent groups on rights to physical education, athletics and community-based services and to validate parent training information related to physical education including infants' and toddlers' programs.

### **National Consortium on Physical Education and Recreation for the Handicapped should...**

- Define competencies of qualified adapted physical educators, including assessment and program planning skills, and disseminate to SEAs, LEAs and IHEs.
- Define competencies of qualified athletic coaches and disseminate to SEAs, LEAs and IHEs.
- Define characteristics of model adapted physical education personnel training programs at the college/university level and disseminate them.

- Develop a position paper on national standards and certification to disseminate to SEAs and advocacy groups for their support in changing state physical education requirements.
- Develop accreditation procedures for approval by the National Certification Association/Teacher Education (NCATE) to monitor delivery of appropriate adapted physical education training at university levels.
- Establish a committee to work with and include representatives of relevant groups to develop competencies and identify criteria for adapted physical education teacher training programs and to disseminate them to university training programs, and to provide guidelines for certification/licensure requirements for adapted physical educators at the national level.
- Establish a similar group to develop competencies for teacher training in extra-curricular athletics for persons with disabilities.

### **Sponsoring Organizations (NASDSE, NCPERH, Special Olympics International) should...**

- Issue a position statement defining physical education and appropriate physical education services, as well as the potential benefits to be derived from these experiences by individuals with disabilities. Such a statement should include information on Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act and the range of opportunities for persons with disabilities at the post-secondary level. The statement should be disseminated to SEAs, LEAs, advocacy groups and institutions of higher education.
- Issue and disseminate a position statement defining extra-curricular athletics, its relationship to physical education, and the benefits to be derived, as well as why it cannot be used as a substitute for physical education.
- Issue and disseminate a position statement defining the related services of occupational therapy, physical therapy, and therapeutic recreation, their relationship to physical education and extra-curricular athletics, and why these services cannot be used as substitutes for physical education.
- Promote funding priorities for communications, research and other activities concerning adapted physical education and athletics, and disseminate them to OSEP, National Institutes of Health, foundations, professional organizations, institutions of higher education, and other potential sponsors.



- Develop strategies for more systematic communication, collaboration, and sharing of information, data, research findings and unmet needs among all groups and agencies that have an impact on physical education in the schools. This should include the use of SpecialNet, Regional Resource Centers, ERIC, NICHE and the National Parents Network, as well as development of a state network to communicate information about adapted physical education. Target groups should include AAHPERD, state and local boards of education, President's Council on Physical Fitness, Governors.
- Design and implement a community-wide public relations campaign to promote awareness of the position statements and educate the community about the benefits of physical activity for persons with disabilities and how they can be achieved through appropriate physical education, recreation and athletics programs.
- In partnership with parent groups, encourage LEAs to enlist assistance from the private sector, including business and industry, and community service agencies to develop quality programs in sports and recreation.
- Work with the appropriate organizations that provide physical education and athletics to develop an awareness of the multitude of sports programs available throughout the community, state, nation and world for persons with disabilities.
- Identify and disseminate integrated sports program models and teacher training models to SEAs, LEAs, teachers, coaches and parents.
- Explore ways to create national, state and local leadership positions in adapted physical education and sports for students with disabilities.
- Create an awards system to recognize exemplary adapted physical education and extracurricular sports programs.

### **The Office of Special Education Programs should...**

- Initiate action immediately to see that SEAs monitor physical education for students with disabilities and that states can report the number of students receiving regular and adapted physical education and those participating in extracurricular activities, and staff development needs.

- Make adapted physical education a priority for staff development, through the Division of Personnel Preparation.
- Direct SEAs and LEAs to place greater priority on inservice training of all school personnel in physical education for individuals with disabilities as documented by CSPD portion of state plans.
- Direct SEAs and LEAs to place greater priority on inservice training of school personnel associated with coaching of students with disabilities, with guidance of the National High School Coaches Association.

### **All SEAs/LEAs should...**

- Monitor LEAs to ensure that the physical education mandates are fully implemented with qualified personnel.
- See that schools include community sports and recreation programs in material disseminated on community-based services for individuals with disabilities.
- Direct schools to make available information about adapted physical education, athletics and recreation during inservice training of volunteer and paid staff.
- Ensure that the IEP includes physical education and encourage IEP teams to include a physical educator knowledgeable in providing physical education for students with disabilities.
- Ensure that all transition plans for students with disabilities include transition to community leisure/recreation and sports programs.

*I have learned there are other things in life other than just staying at home, and I hope other students in special education will have that opportunity. You learn when you are young to have pride in your body. Put your disability behind you. I hope we get out there and spread the word to the states that all students with disabilities should have the opportunities of all other students.*

Loretta Claiborne, Special Olympics Athlete, York, PA

### **All SEAs/IHEs should...**

- Through each state's CSPD program, ensure that qualified faculty and appropriate degree programs are available to prepare adapted physical educators.

- Work cooperatively to develop consistent standards for adapted physical education training programs.

### **National High School Coaches Association/Special Olympics should...**

- Develop accreditation procedures to monitor delivery of appropriate training for coaches.

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*Various events during the past 40 years have contributed to the rapid and expanding growth of sport programs involving individuals with disabilities (e.g., Committee on Sports for the Disabled of the U.S. Olympic Committee, wheelchair events in 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games, changes in sport rules by the National Federation of State High Schools Associations, unified games, etc.) Successes in sport performance can change attitudes. The key is commitment and recognition of the value of sports programs.*

Julian U. Stein, former executive director,  
Unit on Programs for the Handicapped,  
American Alliance for Health, Physical  
Education, Recreation and Dance

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