

AAALF's Inclusion Insights: Net and Wall Activities Middle School Ages: 11-13 years

Developmental Background

Net and wall activities such as tennis, volleyball, and racquetball involve many different movement patterns and skills that often take years to develop and master. Developmentally appropriate games and activities such as paddleball, table tennis, handball, 4-square, balloon smash, and other modified activities help children learn the fundamentals of hand/eye coordination, tracking, body position, timing, and correct striking form. Without ample practice opportunities using developmentally appropriate equipment (e.g. larger rackets, slower or larger balls, larger or smaller playing areas), students will have limited success, will frequently get frustrated, may increase inappropriate behavior (e.g. hitting the ground with racket), and/or quit all together.

For students with disabilities, the ability to track, catch, or strike a moving object (perceptual motor ability) is often identified as an essential IEP goal/objective. Unfortunately, students with disabilities often have not had the opportunities to develop these skills or have not been given appropriately modified equipment to ensure their success. By not identifying the students' skill ability and matching them to appropriately, modified equipment, the student with a disability, is often doomed to fail. Failure discourages involvement and independence. Through appropriate assessment and simple equipment modifications, students with disabilities, and those without, can enjoy a lifetime of net and wall sports and activities that will engage them with their families, friends, and peers. Below are some indicators of success appropriate for middle school students.

Indicators of Success

1. Student completes appropriate practice of striking skills (with the appropriate paddle or body part) at a level commensurate with his or her ability.
2. Student, using a partner, participates in activities facilitating tracking and hand/eye coordination skills at least 6 times a quarter. Improvement in these core skills will be indicated by a rubric used in peer assessment.
3. Each lesson or activity is reported, describing adaptations made to the appropriate skill or task (i.e. difficulty performing the needed skill or inability to move effectively to attain success, etc), which is essential to the student's ability to participate and learn.

Learn to modify your teaching, the environment or the activity! Include students with disabilities in your class in most net and wall sport activities.

How Do You Teach?

- Give clear examples of things they already know. Provide concrete or visual examples to help teach concepts.
- Consider the sequence of tasks. If the student doesn't have prerequisite skills, back up and teach them.
- Teach skills in a whole/part/whole sequence to allow students to become competent or proficient learners.
- Allow time for mastery. Once a new skill is learned, give ALL

students the opportunity to grasp the skill/concept before moving on to the next skill.

- Teach in a variety of environments to ensure proper learning and understanding of a skill (Isolated - Authentic).
- Use multiple senses. Many students, not just ones with disabilities, can benefit from a variety of sounds, textures, weights, and feel of the activity and the equipment used. (See our line of sensory stimulation equipment).

Where Do You Teach?

- Make the playing area smaller and use slower moving objects for students with physical limitations; use larger brightly colored balls for students with visual limitations (bright trainers, contrasting colored balls, or plain backgrounds could be used); lower the nets or use larger rackets for students in wheelchairs.
- Put the players' in a position/environment where they are shielded from other distractions if they lose attentiveness easily or have trouble tracking the ball. Bright balls will help too!
- Use a combination of environmental and equipment modification for those students with multiple, severe, or profound disabilities.
- Provide structure and routine. Some students who are easily distracted or emotionally disturbed may become disoriented by frequent changes in the class routine. If this is the case, be consistent in the structure and routine of the class each day. Also, give these students a specific position or area to help them understand their role (for their team) in the activity.
- Vary the class format if all students cannot learn in the same way. For some, one-on-one instruction is needed, so a peer or teacher's aide can accompany the student. Others need multiple forms of stimuli, thus a station format might be more successful than full class instruction.

Change The Activity Itself!

- Select the best placement in an activity for students with disabilities. A proper placement will maximize their learning opportunity and allow for the usage of the necessary skills, while remembering to ensure the safety of each student in the class (i.e., setter, so they will get many repetitions to set the ball; front row player during doubles play, to work on smashes, drives, etc)
- Limit the time of participation. Students with organic or health impairments such as sickle cell anemia, cardiovascular conditions, or asthma may need to rest more frequently than other students. Work out a system where they can freely use a substitute if they need to rest, or they rotate into and out of more active roles e.g., lowering the winning score in each activity or incorporating a break between each game/set.
- Adapt the skills according to the students' abilities. Allow the ball to bounce twice in tennis, paddle ball, table tennis, or racquetball and once in volleyball. This, of course, requires an adjustment of the standard rules as well.
- Modify the equipment. Manufactured equipment is available for some modifications such as larger, lighter, slower moving balls, paddles/rackets with a larger contact area, and brighter

equipment to help with tracking. Unique modifications are still likely to be needed. Have ace bandages, easy-off adhesive tapes and duct tape on hand. Paddles/rackets as well as appropriate body parts can be taped to assist the student in performing the skill properly. Assistive devices such as a wheelchair, standing frame, walker, or other equipment can be used to help the student get into the correct position. Equipment with handles can also be shortened/lengthened—so be creative!

- Rule changes will be needed to accommodate any number of the previous modifications. If possible, try to align rule changes with disability sport organizations such as the National Wheelchair Softball Association or the National Beep Baseball Association. For rules governing school-aged students participating with mixed disabilities, contact the American Association of Adapted Sports Programs.

The Solutions You Need

The following matrix can be used to identify where, on a two-dimensional continuum, students in your class fit so you can provide the most suitable equipment and supports for their success. The matrix is arranged so that the easier, novice-level activities/skills are identified in the lower left-hand quadrant of the matrix. There you can see to some extent, a developmental sequence of striking and fielding movements with recommended equipment appropriate at each level. In the upper right-hand quadrant, are implications for the most difficult and advanced skills featuring the standard equipment used in any physical education class. If given an option, many students will choose to use equipment that gives them a greater chance for success. If the environment in the class is such that these choices are “okay,” ALL students will learn, find success, and perhaps learn to enjoy an activity they can incorporate into an active lifestyle throughout their lives.

Developing Skills for Net and Wall Activities

Advanced - More Skilled

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volleyballs are standard size and weight. Lightweight trainer volleyballs are low impact and are great for the competent student as well. (G3836, G3849, G2913, G1483) • A size #2 Team Handball is smaller and easier to throw for those with throwing difficulties. (G944) • Students who no longer need an oversized paddle can use these lightweight paddles. (G2592, G7888) • Those students who have begun to master tracking skills and hand/eye coordination are ready for more active balls. (G231, G10725) • A racket with a longer handle and decent contact surface is important for intermediate tennis students. (G259) • High-density foam balls provide a true bounce and allow students to work on their level swing. (G9632, G8995) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with tactile discrimination problems could benefit from using balls that have textured surfaces. (G10194, G7932) • Students with mobility difficulties and tracking problems will benefit from these floater balls. (G10604, G10609, G3836, G3849) • Foam balls allow adequate reaction and movement time for students, who experience less efficient movements, to participate effectively. (G766) • This net is perfect for students with limitations in limb extension and jumping difficulties. Its adjustable capabilities allow you to lower and raise as the student’s ability improves. (G9654) • This ball is music to the ears of a student with a visual impairment. Its ringing allows them to find the correct position to perform a set or bump. (E6240) • These volleyballs have the contrasting colors and speed to be helpful for students with hand/eye coordination discrepancies, but also have the traits to adequately challenge the proficient performer as well. (G1439, G2312) • This ball provides a bounce that helps students perform that perfect drive or lob shot. (G123) |
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← Easier

More Difficult →

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who are struggling to correctly bump, set, or spike a volleyball will benefit from these lightweight balls. (G1222, G942, G1483) • When you are teaching your students the mechanics of skills, these tetherballs may be useful. (G589, G3002) • The “Hand Racket” helps keep a firm arm and wrist to produce a successful return, but also allows students with grasping and fine motor difficulties a chance to make solid contact. (G11719) • These lollipop paddles have an extended handle and large hitting surface that allows solid contact and success in all racket activities. (G11723, G670) • Wooden paddles gives students of all abilities a solid return. (G194, G195) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This trainer ball responds with a slow bounce. It allows the students with gait difficulties vital time to get into the correct position to perform a proper backhand or forehand. (G10725) • Students who have to avoid activities that put a lot of pressure on joints, but want to enjoy the fun of volleyball, should try this water ball. (G11667) • For the pickleball fan, this official ball offers a challenge to students of all ability levels. (G3892) • This tennis set is versatile, enabling it to be used with developmentally appropriate equipment. (G10144) • The racket’s long handle helps a student with minimal lateral movement to cover a good amount of ground. (G4054) |
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Novice - Less Skilled

Note: number referenced indicates FlagHouse item number for appropriate product.

Resources

American Association of Adapted Sports Programs

4585 Park Drive,
Pine Lake, GA 30071
Phone: (404) 294-0070
<http://www.aaasp.org>

United States Tennis Association

70 West Red Oak Lane,
White Plains, NY 10604
Phone: (914) 696-7000
<http://www.usta.com>

International Wheelchair Tennis Federation

Bank Lane
Roehampton
London SW15 5XZ
Great Britain
<http://www.itfwheelchairtennis.com/>

Badminton USA

One Olympic Plaza,
Colorado Springs, CO 80909
Phone: (719) 866-4808

World Organization Volleyball for Disabled

Lindelaan 3 NL-7391
JX Twello
The Netherlands
<http://www.wovd.com/>

American Association for Active Lifestyles and Fitness (of AAHPERD)

Adapted Physical Activity Council,
1900 Association Drive,
Reston, VA 20191
Phone: (800) 213-7193
<http://www.aahperd.org/aaalf/>

This Activity Guide is brought to you through a partnership between the American Association for Active Lifestyles and Fitness (an association of AAHPERD) and FlagHouse.

Author: Timothy D. Davis, Ph.D., CAPE, SUNY Cortland, Adapted Physical Education.

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In the US: FlagHouse, 601 FlagHouse Drive, Hasbrouck Heights, New Jersey 07604-3116 Phone 800.793.7900 201.288.7600 Fax 800.793.7922

In Canada: FlagHouse Canada, 235 Yorkland Blvd., Suite 105, North York, Ontario M2J 4Y8 Phone 800.265.6900 416.495.8262 Fax 800.265.6922

International Customers: FlagHouse, 601 FlagHouse Drive, Hasbrouck Heights, New Jersey, 07604-3116 USA Phone 201.288.7600 Fax 201.288.7887