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INCLUSION AND DISABILITIES IN AND THROUGH SPORT

Best Practice #4 - North Macedonia

OCNM - Olympic Committee of North Macedonia

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Key words. Please insert 3 to 5 key words that best describe the best practice

Young athletes, Judo, Sports competitions

1. Type of Disability

Please describe the type of disability that this practice is focused on. If there is an official definition of the disability in European or National documents please provide it.

People with intellectual disabilities (Down Syndrome)

2. Organization & Reference

If applicable: Official data of organization, school, club etc. (name, address, email). Please give references such as internet source, homepage etc.

The Judo Club SEISHIN-Prilep, a sports club, operates without any professionally employed individuals. All licensed trainers work in other professions and dedicate their time to judo sport on a voluntary basis. Although the club does not have a website due to financial constraints, they can be reached through email at [email address]. The club maintains a presence on social media platforms, including Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/judoclubseishin/>) and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/judo club seishin/?hl=en>).

3. Formal/Informal

Please state if the setting refers to formal or informal education (sport clubs etc.).

Sports club, informal activity

4. Practice summary

Describe what and how was done (regulations of the sport/game/competition/physical activity), please state the specific context of the practice and the sport(s)/game/competition involved.

The physical activity program includes regular judo training sessions three times a week, lasting 1.5 hours each. These sessions take place on the judo tatami, where participants wear judo uniforms (kimono). The training regimen encompasses various activities such as stretching exercises, gymnastics, coordination and concentration exercises, strength exercises, motor exercises, and the learning of judo techniques.

In addition to judo training, the club also engages in fitness training on open sports fields. This involves activities like running, sports games, and other exercises aimed at improving overall fitness levels. Furthermore, the club organizes marches and walks as part of their physical activities.

The club actively participates in sports competitions, including state championships and international tournaments, providing opportunities for members to showcase their skills and compete at different levels.

5. Variations implemented

Please state any kind of useful variations (e.g., concerning settings, age of participants, types of disabilities and adaptations to other sports) of the practice.

At present, the active age limit in our country ranges from 18 to 30 years. However, there is potential for adaptation to accommodate younger adults, but this would require the development of special projects designed specifically for their engagement and participation.

6. People involved

Please state organizations and people involved, provide types of disabilities participated in this specific good/best practice. If applicable, be concrete about the different roles of the people involved.

The Federation of School Sports of Macedonia organizes diverse sports games that bring together participants in Kavadarci.

Our club took the initiative to organize a special event called the World Judo Day, during which we collaborated with the associations for people with disabilities, namely "Poraka" and "Zunica" from Prilep, to commemorate this day under the theme of "INCLUSION." Several members from our club visited the two associations and engaged in judo exercises together. In return, the associations reciprocated by visiting one of our training sessions.

We are fortunate to have coaches who hold certificates for working with younger age categories and active volleyball players who contribute as advisors in our training processes. Their expertise and guidance play a crucial role in our club's development.

7. National guidelines adopted

Please refer to the national guidelines that are met through the practice. Give basic legislation frameworks that can help teachers understand their legal-driven responsibilities towards their students.

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8. Implications for teachers/practitioners etc.

Please write any useful implications (what teachers/coaches/physical educators should take into account: safety considerations, equipment needed, support needed) that the practice might have. This may include focal points of the types of disabilities included and how these points were addressed, in terms of the participation in sports.

The classes involving individuals with intellectual disabilities were a resounding success, bringing immense satisfaction and happiness to all participants. Special attention was given to designing exercises that ensured the safety and well-being of everyone, minimizing the risk of injuries. Due to the limited availability of kimonos, participants practiced in their regular clothes, presenting a minor challenge. The teachers from associations working closely with individuals in this category made invaluable contributions to the classes. Their deep understanding of the participants' habits, communication styles, and other unique characteristics greatly enhanced the overall experience.

9. Innovative resources, materials, methods etc. used

Please refer to the resources, materials, methods etc. have been employed. Strategies for creating an inclusive environment, prioritizing accommodations for students with disabilities, forming/refining accessible facilities, equipment, and assistive technology. Please include techniques for adapting sports activities to meet the needs of students with disabilities, such as modified rules, specialized equipment and assistive devices.

During our activities, we made an effort to distribute informative brochures introducing the sport of judo. Additionally, we provided gifts such as judo calendars and similar items. However, there are also judo books available that require greater financial resources to acquire and distribute to each individual. An example worth mentioning is one of our dedicated members

with Down Syndrome, to whom we gifted such a book. It brought immense joy to see their enthusiasm as they slept with the book and read it multiple times, showcasing their genuine interest and appreciation.

10. Communication and collaboration strategies

If applicable, describe strategies for collaborating with other educators, parents, and students to ensure that everyone is working together to create an inclusive environment.

We do not have a specific communication strategy

11. Evaluation and/or reflection methods

If applicable, state how teachers planned to know, to what extent basic goals were met. That is, give any kind of evaluation practices, self-reflection methods, and forms of data collection, post-event documentations and follow-ups. Also, report any positive feedback and reinforcement given to students with and without disabilities to encourage and motivate them to continue participating in sports.

The classes involving individuals with intellectual disabilities were a source of immense satisfaction for everyone involved, as it brought joy to all participants. Special attention was given to designing exercises that could be comfortably performed by everyone, ensuring that no injuries occurred. Due to a shortage of kimonos for all participants, they practiced in regular clothing, which posed a minor challenge. The teachers from the associations working with individuals in this category made significant contributions to the classes, leveraging their knowledge of their habits, communication styles, and other unique characteristics.

By occasionally observing and engaging in conversations with the parents, one can sense the genuine satisfaction expressed by both the children and

their parents. The achieved results in the mentioned competitions are undoubtedly a testament to the increasing dedication and perseverance in our endeavors. To showcase our progress, we organize practical presentations within the training facility, utilizing media records to share our work. Additionally, we take part in various events and arrange winter and summer camps, both within the country and abroad, to further enhance our activities and provide enriching experiences for the participants.

12. Training pathway for teachers for integrating this good practice

Please provide 5 to 15 practical tips to teachers of sports for implementing the proposed good practice. Ensure that tips: 1. refer both to formal and informal settings 2. Contribute to the awareness of educators for the needs of students with disabilities 3. Take into account the environmental/architectural and attitudinal barriers (such as inaccessible sport spaces, equipment needed, support provided), 4. Provide individualized adaptations 5. Provide social and emotional support by encouraging social interaction and peer support 6. Provide positive reinforcement to motivate them to continue participating in sports and to develop their skills and abilities.

Engaging in activities with children who have intellectual disabilities is not only beneficial for individuals in this category but also for society and the environment at large. It is crucial for institutions to prioritize and provide support to organizations dedicated to working with this population. By doing so, we can collectively contribute to the well-being and inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities, fostering a more inclusive and compassionate society.