SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

In this article, educators and special needs volunteers pinpoint some of the most beneficial activities for students living with physical or mental disabilities. Interactive approaches are the primary focus of the article. Learn about special ed classroom activities that get students moving.

Moving is SMART

Designed by professional physical therapists, the Stimulating Maturity through Accelerated Readiness (S.M.A.R.T.) Curriculum "helps children develop the skills that are essential for classroom learning," says Josh Orpen, Communications Coordinator of the Minnesota Learning Resource Center. The program’s multi-sensory activities provide tools for training the brainstem to develop auditory, visual and motor functions. Examples include:

1) Alligator Crawl—crawling on the stomach across a padded surface while using the opposite arm and leg simultaneously. Arms should extend as they reach, the inside of the foot should dig in as it pushes off, and hands and chest should be flat on the floor (this helps develop basic level coordination and integrate both sides of the brain).

2) Balance Beams—Walking forward, heel-to-toe with eyes open and watching the beam. After this is mastered, try carrying a book, walking backwards, or stepping over the objects on the beam (this helps develop balance...
and body awareness skills that help students sit still in class).

As a volunteer with Oklahoma's Special Olympics Program for many years, Aaron Ashworth has taught numerous sports and life skills activities. He offers several specifics for the middle and high school level which have produced exceptional positive effects. *Swimming*, weight lifting, volleyball and soccer, as well as *wheelchair* basketball, all provide opportunities for the physically or mentally challenged student. "We also found that including teachers, other students, coaches and even parents in some of these extra-curricular activities brought about a better understanding of the obstacles faced by the special needs student or athlete." Other areas of thinking out of the box include partnering with your school's Student Council or Honor Society to plan and perform community works projects. *Special needs students* need more community exposure to be better equipped to accomplish goals independently. Whether it's simple bookkeeping or sales skills, or training for various store or restaurant positions, businesses need to know that the special needs population is capable and willing to carry its own weight in society. "It took less than two years for many of our students to reach their full potential when we allowed them the prep and work experience they needed," Ashworth said. "How exciting to see how they surprised the community, all because a teacher or coach took time to make ordinary activities more inviting and workable!"

**REMEDIAL TEACHING PROGRAMS**

Remedial teaching can be innovative and exciting if teachers are equipped with the latest proven techniques.

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