



# Strategies for Developing Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are often among the most valued and remembered experiences taken from high school. They can be essential in developing friendships, exploring careers, improving skills and having fun. Here are some tips for boosting participation by youth with disabilities in extracurricular activities through the use of natural supports:

- Make extra-curricular activities welcoming to youth with disabilities. Eliminate segregated activities. Encourage youth without disabilities and staff to personally invite youth with disabilities to join.
- Choose activities that will be mutually enjoyable and can involve both students with and without disabilities.
- Develop networks of support for students with disabilities. Build on already-established student relationships. Use activities that allow for frequent rotation of peers so students with disabilities meet and get to know more people.
- Create cooperative climates to promote social interactions. Weave disability efforts into existing programs so people don't have to start from scratch.
- Incorporate leadership roles for all involved, including youth with disabilities.
- Build service learning opportunities and vocational experiences into extra-curricular activities.
- Provide staff training on integration strategies and how to accommodate/modify activities for full participation.
- Encourage students without disabilities to help sustain motivation and provide supports to students with disabilities. Students without disabilities may need some basic information and/or coaching on how to more effectively support youth with disabilities in activities and organizations.
- Incorporate inclusive strategies into all recreational activities. These include maximizing cooperative activities and identifying roles for all participants

ahead of time to ensure engagement. Minimize competitive or independently structured activities.

- ❑ Use naturally occurring environments for activities, such as the school campus or parks in the neighborhood that reduce transportation barriers.
- ❑ Plan on natural proportions of youth with disabilities in organizations, rather than steering all students with disabilities to particular clubs or groups. Avoid pairing older youth with disabilities with younger students because they are “at the same level.”
- ❑ Minimize intervention by professional supports, such as therapists and paraprofessionals. Limit adult roles to cuing and reinforcement of social interactions.
- ❑ Encourage choice-making to increase positive behaviors. Ask students with disabilities about personal interests and then suggest clubs and activities related to interest areas. Avoid plugging youth with disabilities into certain activities and expecting them to automatically enjoy the activities if they have had no input.
- ❑ Provide opportunities for youth with disabilities to take specific leadership roles, such as choosing activities, asking peers to join in, and initiating activities with peers.
- ❑ Teach self-advocacy to students with disabilities, allowing more exploration of interests, goal setting, and strategies to learn how to self-initiate and participate.

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