

Athlete Ambassadors as Advocates: Best Practices in the use of Sport as a Vehicle to Integrate

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LAKE SHORE

First US Olympic and Paralympic Training Site 2003

Fabulous blend of recreation, athletics, Paralympic training & lifetime fitness

ACTIVITY

RESEARCH

ADVOCACY

Prevalence & Relevance

- Over one billion people worldwide have a disability
- As a nation, 54 million people or one in five Americans has a disability.
- People with disability are our nation's largest minority group.
- Most diverse minority group in the world
- Alabama ranks 5th in disability prevalence by population.
- Sport as a vehicle to Integrate - AHSAA
- Wheelchair & Adapted Sport Similarities
- Reduction in Secondary Conditions

Athletics as a Game Changer

Athletes

- Integrate skills learned into everyday life
- Adversity is a part of life – develop strength
- Changed by a challenge - success breeds confidence
- People with a disability are rarely provided with opportunity to lead – create advocates

Coaches

- Encourage & foster independence
- Find balance between enabling and fostering independence
- Teach how to adapt
- Teach how to teach (physical all encompassing learning domain)
- Teach how to advocate appropriately

Sport is an amazing platform from which to lead!

Process of Acceptance

- Unable to deny physical disability
- Adversity is created by society
 - Disability does not need to be overcome, it needs to be embraced
 - Adapted sport is perfect tool to embrace disability
 - Stronger because of adversity

Hidden disability or difference

Devaluation of self

Spend life compensating for what YOU know

(Sub)Conscious Messages you may be sending RESPECT & ACCOUNTABILITY are a TWO-WAY Street

- What are your non-verbal cues saying?
- Speaking “with” rather than “to” athletes
- How do you speak about athletes?
- How prepared are you for practice, games or conversations?
- Do you remember details that are important to them?
- Are you on time? Do you waste their time?
- What happens when you are losing? Are you WITH them?
- Are you a proficient adapted equipment (wheelchair) user?
- Are you willing to put yourself out there? Learn from them too!

Qualities of Successful Leaders

- Focus on the success of others
- Display integrity in all actions
- Be an excellent listener
- Delegate appropriately
- Learn from mistakes
- Exude confidence rather than appear arrogant

“Enabling” vs. Fostering Independence

- Coach serves as barometer
 - Surround with positive veteran athletes
 - Identify with commonalities
 - Step in and out of supporting role as necessary
 - Sometimes for a lifetime
 - Assign responsibility to athlete – Likely more work for you – New to them
 - “Fish for themselves”
 - Coach must be “be still” and allow for progress
 - Fight so hard in the past

When/How do you allow athletes to advocate for themselves?

Evolution of each Adapted Sport

- Perception of specific sport's history
- What were the barriers faced in development
 - Sacrifices made for today's athletes
 - What is coach/athlete's contribution?
- Who has access at this point?
- Meaning of uniform to: individual, team, organization, movement, make your mark
- **As an Athlete how can I make my sport a better vehicle for integration?**

Civil Rights Include Disability Rights

- Universal design – can't legislate morality
- Inequities in daily life
 - Cost of catheters and DME
 - Hand controls
 - Cost of wheelchair
- Males vs. Females with Disability
- Inclusion vs. Integration – AHSAA (What is ultimate goal?)
 - Inclusion should be the standard
- List sports and activities that naturally provide for integration?
- Physical Disability is a massive category with endless etiology
 - Can't generalize
 - Must adapt to meet all needs
 - Hard to know where to start – Watch play
 - Incumbent upon us
 - SMILE! Universal Language

Developing Athlete Ambassadors

- **What is your goal?**
- **How comfortable are you? Parents' thoughts?**
- Model behavior you would like to see in athletes – Be the expert
 - Consider when representing organization within community
 - What does the uniform represent?
 - Eyes on you ALWAYS athletes/parents always watching – Model behavior
 - Help athlete identify their asset as an advocate
- Use various educational approaches
 - Teach Athletes to Teach – Mastery of Skill
 - Advocacy – Are you using the best approach?
 - Legislation rather than educational conversation
- Teach Athletes how to ask good questions
- Help athlete understand motivation behind society's inquiries
- What DO we expect – Be Clear & Consistent

Athlete Ambassadors

- Athletes must
 - Develop personal brand
 - Demonstrate respect for their sport as a vehicle to integrate
 - Serve as a resource – higher order
- Representation of much more than self
 - Team, Sport, Organization, People with a Disability
- Provide feedback in the development of organizations' athletic policies
- Take ownership – pride – Learn about it Love of Lakeshore – Live it
- Outward representation of self (Wheelchair, clothing, etc.)
- Educate – “Educe” – Bring forth what is within – teach them to teach true measure of knowledge is TEACHING

Develop Personal Brand

- Athlete considerations:
 - What do you want people to know about you?
 - Every athlete has a different gift beyond sport
 - Opportunity to change expectations
 - Unique traits, characteristics, attitude and beliefs
 - Consider quote, icon or image you relate to?
 - Ask why do you relate to it?

Creation of Positive Legacy

- Define your legacy...How do you want to contribute?
- What does your community need?
- Focus on larger purpose (Make a difference) find a purpose that is worthy of your efforts
- Be aware of who you are and develop strengths & interest
- Where does your motivation come from
- Give back – Investment of Time – You have my time you have ME
- Every action both on and off the field can effect sport performance positively or negatively
- Athletes need to choose words carefully - easily misrepresented in media for story
- Never repeat or restate negative word - media is focusing on
- Positive self talk – Block negative messages
- *Average attention span is short – What can you say in 15 seconds*



Communication: Language, Images & Disability

Language is a powerful tool that has the ability to paint a picture. Each word we use can drastically change the image we see.

“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between a lightening bug and a lightning bolt.” Mark Twain



What's in a Word?

One of the biggest barriers people with disabilities face is attitude (stigma)

- Attitude is conveyed by word choice. What is “normal”?
- Handicapped, invalid, retard– Labels – What do you imagine? Colours
Wheelchair - SPAZZ
- Greeks and Romans – Utter a curse – Most powerful thing
- Appropriate words promote understanding, dignity and a respect for diversity
- *Pamela Anderson – has more prosthetic than most amputees and they don't call her “handicapped”*

Medical vs. Social Model

- **Medical Model** – Disability is viewed as a problem specific to an individual focused on “treating or curing” the individual.

Disability is not synonymous with *unhealthy!*

- **Social Model** – Disability is viewed as a societal issue focused on removing societal barriers for individuals with a disability.



Person-first vs. Identity-first Language

Person-first: Focuses on the person and views a disability as a secondary characteristic like red hair or brown eyes.

- The U.S. predominately uses person-first language.

Identity-first: A disability is seen as a part of a person's identity. It is something to be proud of, a community to be a part of.

- Blind and Deaf communities predominately prefer identity-first language.
- It is used in the U.K. and other progressive countries to promote the social model.

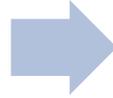


Passive vs. Active Language

To neutralize debate, focus on using active language.

People in wheelchairs
Wheelchair-bound

My patient is in a wheelchair.

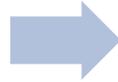


People who use wheelchairs

My patient uses a wheelchair.

Suffers from

This client suffers from.....

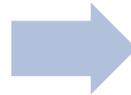


Lives with

This client lives with....

Disabled Parking
Wheelchair seating
Handicapped Restroom

We have a handicapped restroom.



Accessible Parking
Accessible Seating
Accessible Restroom

We have an accessible restroom.



Avoidance Language

To many, avoiding the word “disability” promotes the negative connotation of the word and can sound quite silly.

- Differently able
- Physically challenged
- Special, special needs
- Handicapable



Inspirational Language

Inspirational language or “inspiration porn” objectifies people with a disability for the good of people without disability.

- Sally overcame her disability to compete on her swim team.
- You are so inspiring.

How do we move athletes from “inspirations” to empowered LEADERS?

<http://mwr.nytimes.com/2016/09/18/sports/athletes-at-paralympics-pursue-gold-not-platitudes.html>

So, what do I say?

Is it necessary to talk about the person's disability?

- If so, address disability as a characteristic, not a tragedy.
- Use active rather than passive language.
- Consider the social model of disability.
- When in doubt, ask the person you are speaking with or writing about.
- Subtle cues: Observant people - Repeat appropriate phrase in place of inappropriate within conversation



Change Expectation - Represent

- Adapted Sport - More similarities than differences
- Heighten ability awareness levels just by watching
 - What is your follow-up?
- Representing something bigger
 - Can seem overwhelming
- Strength in diversity
- RE-educate to dispel stigma of wheelchair
- Process of integration
- Eye level and contact – marketable
- People with intellectual disabilities
- **Why does it matter?**

Research

- The UAB/Lakeshore Research Collaborative studies cutting-edge physical activity techniques and innovations for people with physical disability. The Collaborative's core strength is its “on the ground” integration with our fitness, athletic and recreation programs. The collaborative leads the way nationally and internationally in scientifically proving the impact of our work, developing new technologies and further expanding the reach of programs to those who need them.



The National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD) is the premier resource for information on physical activity, health promotion, and disability, serving persons with physical, sensory and cognitive disability across the lifespan. NCHPAD features a variety of resources and services which benefit all ages and populations and can be found online at www.nchpad.org

Advocacy

- Lakeshore speaks out to make physical activity accessible to all individuals. Through advocacy and policy our team works to educate and train individuals on the importance of physical activity for those with physical disability, support federal, state and community based policy initiatives, and nationally disseminate physical activity best practices and resources.
- **Consider: Physical disability is a massive category. What is our unified message? Does it matter?**

Topics for Discussion

8 year old wanting to try it all

Doesn't get any better but how to expose?

- Equipment:
- Seating – Position to be most effective
- Sport - Purpose on Team or Sport
- Everyday – Accessibility, Eye Contact, Counter height, keys on floor
- Experience/Age/Versatility
- Investment Young/New – Adjustable, versatile, durable
- Balance: Love for Movement, Accessibility

Technology

- Communication
 - Team App
- Equipment – My favorite part of the profession
 - Eliminates stigma

Technological Developments

Wheelchair Composition – “A chair fitted with wheels”

- Titanium, aluminum, carbon fiber, steel

Spinergy

- Strong, light, enable tilt, endure impact, low maintenance

So much more than “A chair fitted with wheels”

Titanium, Aluminum, Carbon Fiber, Steel

Center of Gravity

Hold onto ball or implement and control chair w/body

Ergonomic Design

Wheel size

Powder-coated/anodized/rubberized pushrims

Propulsion mechanics – injury prevention

6th Wheel Design

Increased Stability

Back into shooter – Able to Encroach on space

Ridged/Welded Sideguards/Molding





LAKESHORE

**THERE IS NO
PHYSICAL LIMIT TO
HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT.**



LAKESHORE