

Presentation Transcript

Topic: Unified Sports and Play Inclusive

Speaker: Kim Lau, SportCares, Tiffany Lim, Special Olympics Singapore & Maria Koh,
Rainbow Centre

Tiffany: Hi, I'm Tiffany from Special Olympics Singapore.

Maria: And I'm Maria from Rainbow Centre.

Kim: I am Kim from SportCares.

Tiffany: Before we go into why SportCares and Special Olympics, with the support from MOE, came together for the Play Inclusive. Let me bring you back to something unique to Special Olympics, which we call, Unified Sports.

Tiffany: So, what exactly is Unified Sports, it is about joining people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. And individual with ID, we call them athletes. And individuals without ID we call them Unified Partner or in short (UP). For example, in a unified basketball team, five vs five game, there will be three athletes and two Unified Partners on court. The team is made up of people of similar age and ability. Importantly, it's about promoting social inclusion through sports. Back to the principle of training together and playing together, a quick path to friendship and understanding.

Tiffany: In unified sports, team needs to incorporate the principle of meaningful involvement. This means that, during competition, our players are presented with numerous opportunities throughout the course of the game to contribute to their team's performance. This decreases the potential for domination by higher ability teammates. In unified team, the goal is that every teammate is engaged, playing a meaningful role and has the opportunity to contribute. In unified sports, quality of social interaction and communication is especially important is the key which allows everyone to participate fully and working together as a team to enjoy a positive experience.

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Tiffany: To ensure every player is given an opportunity to contribute. First, every teammate is able to demonstrate sufficient sports specific skills, understand how the game is played, understand the rules and regulation of the game, so that to participate according to the rules of competition. Second, every teammate plays a valuable role on the team that emphasises his or her personal talents. Meaning, every player has the ability and opportunity to contribute to the performance of the team. Third, every teammate has an opportunity to play without a hidden risk of injury. Meaning, compete without causing undue risk to themselves or others. This is possible with teammates adjusting their skill according to those of other players, resulting in improved performance by team members with less ability.

Tiffany: Instead of me telling how great unified sport is building social inclusion. Let's watch the following video from World Summer Games 2019, and hear from athletes Unified Partners and Coaches.

Tiffany: From the video, you can see that the impact of unified sports plays in building social inclusion. It's not only our athletes have learned the positive values and skills, which they can apply in school, work and even life, but the Unified Partners and Coaches have learnt in the process of training the team as well. Now, I shall hand over to Kim to continue and tell you more about Play Inclusive.

Kim: Okay, thank you Tiffany. Special Olympics Unified Sports is a brilliant concept for inclusion. And SportCares would like to leverage on this vehicle, to invite more people on board as we work towards a more inclusive society through sport. In 2018, Special Olympics Singapore and SportCares, supported by Ministry of Education, join hands to organise play inclusive. To promote inclusion in the community through shared sporting experiences between persons with and without intellectual disabilities, and to showcase the value of sport in bridging communities, forging friendships, and promoting care in the community. Play Inclusive was the largest unified sports competition, in Singapore, in 2018 and 2019. And have expanded to include other disability groups progressively. Based on Special Olympics Unified Sports Rules and to promote understanding and friendship in unified sports, teams must train for a minimum of eight weeks together before competing in the finale event.

Kim: In the inaugural event in 2018, close to 450 players came together to train and took part in four sports, namely, Badminton-Doubles, three on three Basketball, three on three Floorball and five aside Football. The event was graced by Mr. Ong Ye Kung, the Minister of Education in 2018.

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Kim: And we were blessed to have the support of 21 special schools and adult centres and 17 partner schools, in 2018, with volunteers from all walks of life.

Kim: In 2019, we had overwhelming participation from almost 800 players and extended the finale competitions to two days over the weekend. And, Goalball, a sport usually played by persons with visual impairments came on board and formed inclusive teams with mainstream institutions and sports organisations too. And Guest-of-Honor for that year was Miss Indranee Raja, Second Minister for Education.

Kim: In that year, we had about 28 special schools and centres partnering 27 schools and agencies, to form inclusive teams and Goalball brought in a new list of partners too.

Kim: Let us now show you the Play Inclusive 2019 video before teacher, Maria from Rainbow Centre, share review of her school's experience in Play Inclusive.

Maria: All right, so Kim and Tiffany, you know it's really so exciting when this opportunity came because, you know, I've been a teacher in teaching sports for so long and there's always, you know, my students always do so well in like individual skills like, shooting, dribbling, and things like that, but there's always this thing about understanding concepts like rules and know things that so abstract. So, when this Play Inclusive, Unified Sports came about, it was so exciting. Because, these Unified Partners can form the missing link. In 2018, we were supposed to partner our satellite partner, Queensway Secondary School. We were so excited about it, how can we, do this linking. Because, I really like the rule about Unified Partners have to train with our athletes for eight weeks, because we can't just play the game like that. They need to know each other and create this friendship and bond. So, when we met with the teachers from Queensway Secondary Schools, I suggested that we have a pre-bonding camp.

Maria: Before our training, we actually had this pre-bonding camp, where we invited Queensway Secondary School students, with our students, including our teachers, and we got volunteers from a church that was next to Rainbow Centre, Margaret Drive School, to come in to assist us in this planning. The objective of this pre-bonding camp was, of course, to get to know each other. So, we broke them out into groups. And then, we actually played a lot of games. So, it was so fun, because it was my first time experiencing a camp-like kind of activity with my students. And, you can see the faces of my students, those in blue, they were so happy to have friends from outside, because we are always so enclosed in school. So, this opportunity to actually mix around with students from other mainstream school and from community, it really brings up the experience of our students. And we played a lot of games.

Maria: And one of the parts I really love about the pre-bonding camp was the, reflection part. Because I think all learnings are richer, if there are reflections, but there's always this thing about connecting our students to experiences. And that's where our Unified Partners, were able to make that missing link. They were able to, get them experience, get them to say what they had experienced.

Maria: Or they can say, draw out, or use symbols that you know how students of autism will communicate best with. And able to help them to, relate the experience of the day. And that was really one of the 'goosebump moments' because I when I see them getting to interact and really doing a reflection, it really makes my day.

Maria: During the pre-bonding, we also get them to play a game together. And this photo really warms my heart, because you can see a small little girl with our students and our teachers playing games together. This really means that Inclusion is not only for schools, it's for community partners, too. So, I think this is such a great platform for us to actually build a relationship and for everybody to be aware that athletes with special needs can achieve if they are given a platform and opportunity to do so.

Maria: And of course, during the game in 2019, the second year, it was something that students look forward to. Both the athletes and the (UP). And it's amazing, because they already had the experience in 2018, they already know what to expect in 2019. And you can see that some of the returning students of (UP) came back and volunteer again and said, "I want to be in even though, I've got exams." Because, they really experience how it felt. And our students are familiar with them. They're familiar with the concept and you can really see them performing as a team. And I really look forward to the games' day, Play Inclusive. Because, you really see that they are there for one common purpose. It is not to just, win. It is to work together. And I think, that's the best part. Because, when you see the other schools who are playing is really fighting for the teamwork, like to really do their best and you can see (UP) from other schools, having fun with (UP) from other schools. It's such a good atmosphere in this in this Play Inclusive event.

Maria: And of course, they always look forward to the medal presentation, be it a ribbon or be it a medal. They are always so excited to see their faces, especially taking photos and not having this victory smile.

Maria: And of course, as I mentioned about 2020, we were very, very glad to be invited to be part of 2020 Virtual Addition of Play Inclusive. It was unfortunate that we couldn't come together, but one thing that stood out was that, even we were behind screens, we were not able to intermingle between schools, we were still able to get interaction. Our students were still so excited to look at a screen and work out with the athletes, and the (UPs) from our partner school.

And one of the amazing things was, I think, the (UPs) from this time round was, from Yishun. Because we are from Yishun Park School. The (UPs) from our partner school really took time to think about activities to engage through the screen is now not so easy as playing a basketball game. But they really think out of the box, how can I engage, with the athletes from Rainbow Centre School. And the amazing thing was, at the end of it, you can see everybody being so happy even on screen. And having this was a good experience. I really am grateful for a platform like this, and I look forward to many more Play Inclusive events to come.

Kim: Thank you, teacher Maria. Thank you for sharing all this with us. We're so happy listening to all your sharing. And, yes, now you heard from teacher Maria in 2020. Because of COVID-19 situation, the unified teams training was disrupted, and we are not able to also hold large events, in 2020. However, we saw the opportunity to explore new ways to reach communities and create friendships and sporting memories during the pandemic. So, we went virtual. We went virtual to pair youths for mainstream and special education schools together. To learn and complete workouts together on virtual platforms. And actually, some teams came together to do an exercise regime or dance regime online, during that six to eight weeks. And in total, about 54 athletes from 10 special schools, and 58 Unified Partners from 11 mainstream schools participated. And we had the first hybrid Play Inclusive finale held on 7 November 2020, where four teams were present physically and the other 10 teams and their families were online.

Kim: So, we had Exercise Bingo to play. And for this year, with consideration of COVID-19 advisories, the organising committee is currently gathering feedback from past participating schools and organisations on this year's campaign model or platform. So, for those who have not feedback to us kindly contact Special Olympics Singapore office.

Kim: And with that, we will end the presentation with Play Inclusive 2020 video. Thank you.