

GYMNASTICS ACTIVELY INCLUDING A CHILD



WHAT A PARK DISTRICT GYMNASTICS LESSON MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

Typically, there is one Assistant Coach/Instructor for eight to ten children. The Head Coach will typically lead warm ups for the entire group. The assistance will ensure proper body positioning during stretches and exercises. After warm – ups, the group will split off into smaller groups, based on ability. The groups will rotate through equipment or stations for skills. To end the class there is often a whole group cool down.

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- If the child has a hard time waiting, encourage them and wait with them between turns
- Often the assumption is made that the aide will take over as the teacher. **THIS IS INCORRECT.** If the teacher assists each child in the program, they should also assist the child who has a disability even if there is an inclusion aide.
- The aide’s role involves including the child in the lesson with the rest of the gymnasts, not offering a parallel individual lesson.

REASONS FOR ASSISTANCE

Determine what the main purpose of the aide assistance is. Usually in gymnastics, it is for one of the following:

- Focus/ Attention (wait time is often difficult)
- Behavioral issues
- Cognitive issues – (some directions may need to be repeated or presented in a different way)
- Physical assistance – lack of strength or coordination – only trained instructors should spot gymnasts on equipment
- Communication



IF THE CHILD HAS DIFFICULTY WITH FOCUS AND ATTENTION:

- Remind the child to listen to the teacher, using cue words, short phrases, or visual reminders and gestures
- Have the child repeat teacher’s instructions immediately after they are given, and just before their turn
- Ask the coach/instructor for easy stretches or exercises that can be used during wait time (if safe)
- Break down skills into simple steps (ask the coach for help or to demonstrate the skill very slowly)
- Use “First/ Then” language
- Give the child a time frame for amount of time left for skill, or time until the skill is over. Countdowns or a timer might be helpful.

IF THE CHILD HAS BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

- Establish rules and have the child repeat them. Develop specific rules for tough situations or to target behaviors
- Make sure the rules are easily understood and presented in positive language
- Have copies of rules on paper, ready to be referenced
- Consequences should be predetermined, concrete and understand the child
- If a behavior plan is in place, be consistent and follow through with it.



IF THE CHILD NEEDS PHYSICAL ASSISTANCE

- The aide may need specific training on adaptive equipment
- The aide may need specific training on lifting and transferring
- Aides should not spot a gymnast on equipment, including stunts on the floor unless they are properly trained.
- If the participant is unsteady, the aide should never turn their back on them.

IF THE CHILD HAS COMMUNICATION OR COGNITIVE ISSUES

- Create a schedule for the lesson – this format could be used to reinforce the smaller components of each element or to review the overall format of the class
- Many gyms have footprints or handprints that can be placed on the floor to give a visual cue of where to put your body.
- Ask yes/no questions instead of open-ended questions
- Rephrase directions from the teacher, use clear concise language
- Adapt group games as needed



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