

Information on Cognitive Disabilities

PSIA-RM-AASI Adaptive Snowboard 2012-13

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Local and program regulations and safety guidelines take precedence over this information. It is in your best interest to exercise due diligence in determining the appropriateness of the information for your particular circumstances. In addition, please take into account any and all factors that may affect your lesson. This includes but is not limited to: the health, well-being and fitness of the student; weather conditions; terrain; other people on the slope; your own abilities, as well as those of your student and anyone who may accompany you.

A **Developmental Disability** is a condition resulting from congenital abnormalities, trauma, disease or deprivation that interrupts or delays normal growth and development. Some of the more common conditions are: Mental Retardation, Developmental Delays, ADD/ADHD and other Learning Disabilities, Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Epilepsy, Fragile X Syndrome and Downs Syndrome.

A **Cognitive Disability** consists of damage to, or deterioration of any portion of the brain that affects the ability to process information, coordinate and control the body, or move in space. Some of the more common diseases are: Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Huntington's, Cerebrovascular Disease or Brain Tumor. Other causes include injury or trauma to the Brain, such as TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury) Stroke and Hemiplegia.

Please refer to the PSIA Adaptive Manual, Bold Tracks, any other Medical Literature or Disability specific websites for more detailed information regarding these Disabilities. Due to the enormous range of physical and mental abilities this segment of population includes, a very thorough individual assessment of each student is necessary. Being familiar with the details of the above-mentioned diagnoses helps you to get started, but each individual is different.

Here are some of the basics to begin an individual assessment:

-Physical shape / physical abilities and limitations

Consider: age, do they participate in other physical activities, what parts of the body functions and how, which movements are affected, poor balance ? does the cold / heat affect endurance, hidden disabilities . . .

-Intellectual processing capabilities and behavior pattern

Consider: intellectual age and processing, learning preferences, social behavior patterns, situations that might trigger unexpected / dangerous reactions, redirecting, toileting issues, easily frustrated. .

-Special communication needs

Consider the use of: picture books, sign language, closed-ended sentences, yes or no questions, words that trigger wanted or unwanted behavior, need to follow a 'schedule' . . .

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-Safety considerations

A helmet is recommended for everyone. Highly encouraged those individuals with a Brain Injuries, shut and seizure disorders. Precautions for seizures, medication side effects, where medications' taken, or not, do they carry meds with them. Precautions for those with shunts, cerebral instability @ 1st & 2nd vertebrae (Downs Syndrome) and someone who has diabetes.

Some do's and don'ts : **For those individuals with Cognitive Disabilities**

Do address the students according to their intellectual understanding.

Do ask parents or caregivers about behaviors / reactions that might become a safety concern.

Do address individual learning styles (Thinker, Doer, Feeler, Seer). (VAK)

Do pay especially close attention to your students fatigue level.

Do keep a very close eye on your student, without smothering them.

Do keep your student interested in what you are doing. Having fun might be more important than a strict lesson plan.

Do find out what your students / parents expectations are. They might be a lot less than what you are expecting from yourself as a teacher.

Do promote independence. Sometimes that includes finding unorthodox solutions. If it works and is safe for everybody, go for it.

Do not talk down to a person with average or high IQ, just because they are hard to understand.

Do not give a Developmentally Delayed Child a highly technical explanation of abstract concepts such as the gravity zone in relation to edge angle engagement.

Do not expect to keep your students full attention when there are lot's of other things going on around him/her. You might try to find a more secluded teaching area.