

## INTRODUCING PARALYMPIC SPORTS IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION COURSES!!! A DIDACTIC PROPOSAL UTILIZING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

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### ABSTRACT

Disability is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing physical and cognitive limitations, and also considering the social, cultural, and environmental factors influencing lived experience. Understanding and recognizing the diversity of disabilities, is fundamental to achieving an inclusive and equitable education system. Paralympic sports significantly alter societal perceptions of disability. The importance of these activities transcends mere leisure. Paralympic sports encompass adapted athletic disciplines tailored to the specific needs of athletes, including track and field, swimming, and wheelchair tennis. The pedagogical framework of the "Introducing Paralympic Sports at School!" program focuses on educating secondary school students about motor and sensory impairments, thereby advancing fair and inclusive physical education. Through the use of information and communication technologies, students participate in hands-on, collaborative learning experiences centered on Paralympic themes. This novel proposal integrates theoretical frameworks, multimedia resources, and interactive activities to cultivate knowledge, empathy, collaborative skills, and an appreciation for disability. Positive attitudes toward disability and full student inclusion are fostered through active participation and experiential learning.

**Keywords:** Adapted Physical Education, Disability, Inclusion, Information and Communication Technologies, Paralympic sports.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Disability is a multifaceted concept encompassing not only physical and cognitive limitations but also social, cultural, and environmental influences on individual lives. It is not merely a medical condition; rather, it represents a dynamic interplay between the individual and his/her environment. The development of an inclusive and equitable education system necessitates the acknowledgment and comprehension of diverse disabilities. Motor and sensory impairments constitute the two primary classifications (Garcia et al., 2015).

Impairments in mobility encompass challenges with movement, locomotion, postural stability, and limb function. Cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spinal injuries, and neurological conditions are some of the possible causes. To increase independence and social inclusion,

individuals with mobility issues frequently use assistive technology like wheelchairs, walkers, or orthopedic devices (Ventura et al., 2023).

Sensory disability involves limitations in one or more senses, with vision and hearing impairments being the most common. Visual impairments can range from partial vision loss to complete blindness, while hearing impairments include grades of hearing loss up to complete deafness. These disabilities create barriers to information access and communication, thereby mandating the use of specialized support mechanisms such as sign language. Assistive technologies for the visually impaired encompass Braille, descriptive audio, and image-to-speech software. The challenges faced by individuals with disabilities stem not only from functional impairments but also, substantially, from societal barriers and prejudice. Stereotypes, insufficient access, infrastructure absence, and lack of information enhance exclusion, requiring an inclusion-based approach (Ashok et al., 2023; Servidio et al., 2024).

Inclusive practices require active engagement, fair access, and recognition of various needs for students with disabilities to prevent stigma and go beyond mere physical presence in the school setting. This approach integrates social and educational elements, prioritizing diversity as a facilitator, rather than an obstacle, to individual success. Within an educational setting, a behavioral approach fosters collaborative learning, cooperation, empathy, and social responsibility among students (Carbone et al., 2021).

Paralympic sport substantially alters societal perceptions of disability. These activities offer substantial avenues for empowerment, self-expression, and the exhibition of human strength, in addition to their recreational benefits. Paralympic sports comprise adapted athletic disciplines designed to meet the unique requirements of athletes, encompassing track and field, swimming, and wheelchair tennis. In addition, these incorporate athletic competitions specifically designed for various disabilities, including:

a) Goalball is a team sport played indoors primarily relying on hearing and touch, designed for individuals with visual impairments. Players wear masks that completely block vision and use a special ball with bells to locate it. Their aim is to throw the ball into the opponent's goal, while the defenders try to block it with their bodies. The sport promotes cooperation, concentration and motor skills, offering opportunities for sport and participation in international competitions.

b) Boccia, a strategic sport, is specifically designed to be inclusive of those with significant motor skill limitations. Played indoors with leather balls, the objective is to position one's ball as near as possible to the cue ball.

c) Wheelchair basketball, a popular sport utilizing standard courts and modified wheelchairs, features teams of five players. The game's rules are largely analogous to basketball, incorporating adjustments to promote fair play. The sport requires coordination, speed and team spirit.

d) Seated volleyball, played on a smaller court with a lowered net and six players, is a remarkable sport. Participants maintain a seated position throughout the game, thereby increasing the demands on reflexes and strategic thinking.

(Ferreira et al., 2023; Magnanini & Morelli, 2021; Sidiropoulos et al., 2015).

Following the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games, a quadrennial event, present an international forum for athletes with disabilities to exhibit their abilities. Athletes regularly demonstrate the overcoming of substantial obstacles, becoming sources of inspiration and challenging established social stereotypes. The Paralympic Games demonstrate that disability does not equate to weakness, but rather represents an alternative mode of existence, performance, and achievement (Magnanini & Morelli, 2021).

The contribution of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is crucial in this process in terms of introducing the Paralympic athletes to students in mainstream schools. Through the use of interactive media, multimedia presentation formats and digital tools, students can gain knowledge about the types of disability and their connection with Paralympic sports, in an interactive and experiential way (Patsi, Nikolaidou & Evaggelinou, 2025). The use of video in the educational process, as well as the creation of presentations or narratives, enhances learning and promotes collaborative and critical thinking (Henderson, 2020; Patsi & Evaggelinou, 2022; Patsi, Yfantidou, Antoniou, Gkoraki & Lagiou 2016).

The dissemination of information to students regarding: a) The classifications of disability, b) The Paralympic Games and sports, enhanced by ICT, embody values that foster modern, inclusive learning environments where all students can actively participate, self-express, and engage with authentic narratives. Not only are cognitive skills nurtured this way, but also moral and social values such as respect, solidarity, and acceptance of diversity are cultivated (Brodin, 2010; Patsi & Evaggelinou, 2022; Patsi, Yfantidou & Antoniou, 2016).

### **Teaching Proposal with the use of ICT**

**Title:** Introducing Paralympic sports in Physical Education courses!

**Objects:** Adapted Physical Education, Physical Education, English, Computer Science

**Grade:** Secondary School students (Greece)

**Purpose:** Students will learn about disability, focusing on hearing and visual impairments, and cerebral palsy. Students will be informed and sensitized about the possibilities of participation of individuals with disabilities in physical education courses.

**Educational goals:** Following the end of the lesson students should be able to:

#### **Cognitive Skills:**

- Recognise the importance of disability.
- Learn about Paralympic sports.
- Improve digital skills.

#### **Psychomotor skills:**

- Demonstrate basic motor skills for Paralympic sports, such as seated volleyball passing.

- Enhance their accuracy in target throwing.

**Emotional Skills:**

- Develop attitudes of respect and acceptance towards diversity.
- Actively cooperate with one another.
- Be responsible for their own learning.

**Duration:**

3 teaching hours (135 minutes approx.)

**2.0 SHORT DESCRIPTION**

**Physical infrastructure components.**

For the classroom lesson, a projector (PowerPoint, YouTube), 16 computers (for digital quiz completion), and internet connection will be needed. The schoolyard lesson requires cones, obstacles, masks, 16 chairs, basketballs, volleyballs, 2 whistles, a meter, a timer, Boccia balls, 2 sets of goalball balls, sports cards, and puzzle cards.

**Concise overview**

**Teaching Method:**

The teaching method to be used will be:

- The command style (during the practical application of the Paralympic sports in the school yard, where students will perform the activities taught by the Physical Education teacher).
- The inclusive style (seeking the participation of all students through activity adaptations).
- The guided inventiveness style (which will be applied during the presentation through questions that students will be asked to answer).

**Classroom organization:**

1st teaching hour

For the inside the class lesson, in the first teaching hour, the 16 students will first gather in the computer laboratory, which has 16 desktop computers and a projector. Following a short lecture on disability and the Paralympic sports, students will watch a Power Point presentation and some videos on YouTube (in English language) showcasing characteristics of Paralympic sports, as well as information on mobility and sensory impairments, to prepare them for the quiz at the end. Students should be focused and show interest while participating in discussions or asking questions to better understand the lesson.

2nd and 3rd teaching hour

Practical training will commence in the schoolyard for the entire class during the second and third teaching hours. The planned space will recreate the competitive atmosphere of Paralympic events and offer various adapted activities suitable for individuals with disabilities. The Physical Education (PE) teacher presents the basic movements and techniques, which the students perform with appropriate adaptations and through imitation, following the instructions given. There is enough space between them to facilitate the performance of the exercises safely. Finally, students in pairs or small groups practice activities that include elements of Paralympic sports.

### **Enhanced educational value of ICT**

ICT increases student understanding of Paralympic sports and disabilities by using digital media like presentations to show information. In addition, through watching relevant videos, students learn about Paralympic sports, understand their basic elements and become aware of the diversity of individuals with disabilities. Simultaneously, interactive content and digital quizzes familiarize them with ICT, answering their questions. In this way, their active participation is enhanced through a more engaging and collaborative learning environment, while at the same time encouraging them to engage in a variety of sporting activities. Finally, ICTs make an essential contribution to lesson planning and programming, facilitating better management of teaching time and enhancing students' digital literacy.

### **Course requirements**

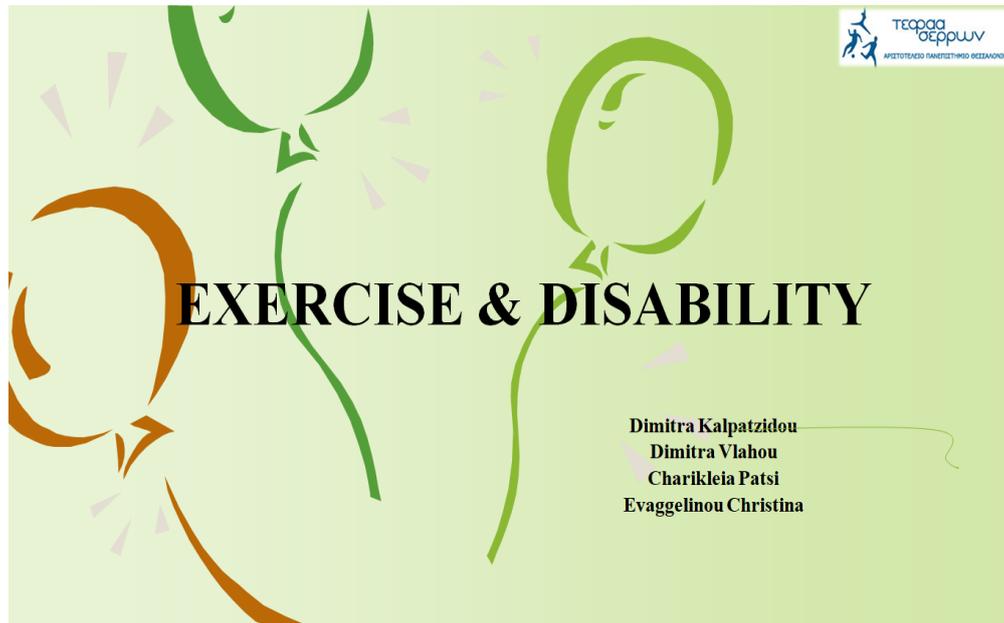
In previous lessons, the teacher has given a short introduction on disability and inclusion, and has also introduced the digital environment that the students will use (digital quiz), preparing them for the activities that will follow.

### **Activities/ Teaching Phases**

#### **Phase 1 (1st teaching hour)**

##### **Activity 1 - Exercise and disability (12')**

At the beginning of the activity, an introductory discussion will be held with the students about the types of disability (cerebral palsy, sensory disorders) and the importance of participation of people with disabilities in sport. This will be followed by a presentation on the concept of disability, Paralympic sports and activities with adaptations for people with disabilities, as well as the benefits of exercise for all. The presentation will include images and information that will help students understand how modifications and adaptations can be made to the physical education classroom so that all students, with and without disabilities, can participate. The presentation will be followed by class discussion and questions, so that students can express their questions and actively interact with the content.



- [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1eEY8D\\_SwyHJAoCPkj3Fqp0uHnM025KrHCs8OxstEeY/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1eEY8D_SwyHJAoCPkj3Fqp0uHnM025KrHCs8OxstEeY/edit?usp=sharing)

#### Activity 2 (4')

In the following video, students will watch information about disability to raise awareness and empathy.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjvmAUbfXdw&pp=ygUzZGZlZWJpbG10aWVzIGhvdvdyB0byBjb3JlIHdpdGggdGhlsSAmIHN1cHBvcnQgb3RoZXJz>

#### Activity 3 (5')

Students will watch two videos on some characteristics of disability and the concept of inclusion.

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F4Hp0N\\_A1Q&pp=ygUVd2hhdCBhcmUgZGZlZWJpbG10aWVz0gcJCYYYJAYcqIYzv](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F4Hp0N_A1Q&pp=ygUVd2hhdCBhcmUgZGZlZWJpbG10aWVz0gcJCYYYJAYcqIYzv)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SzazN2OrsQ&pp=ygUfZGZlZWJpbG10eSBhb mQgY2hpbGQgcHJvdGVjdGlvbG%3D%3D>

#### Activity 4 (10')

Students will watch two videos which include clips of various Paralympic sports from the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM2TcfPyAfY&pp=ygUuYmVzdCBtb21lbnRzI GZyYW5jZSBwYXJpcyAyMDI0IHBhcmFseW1waWMgZ2FtZQ%3D%3D>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xddkeA6fstw&pp=ygUuYmVzdCBtb21lbnRzIG ZyYW5jZSBwYXJpcyAyMDI0IHBhcmFseW1waWMgZ2FtZdIHCQmGCQGhKiG M7w%3D%3D>

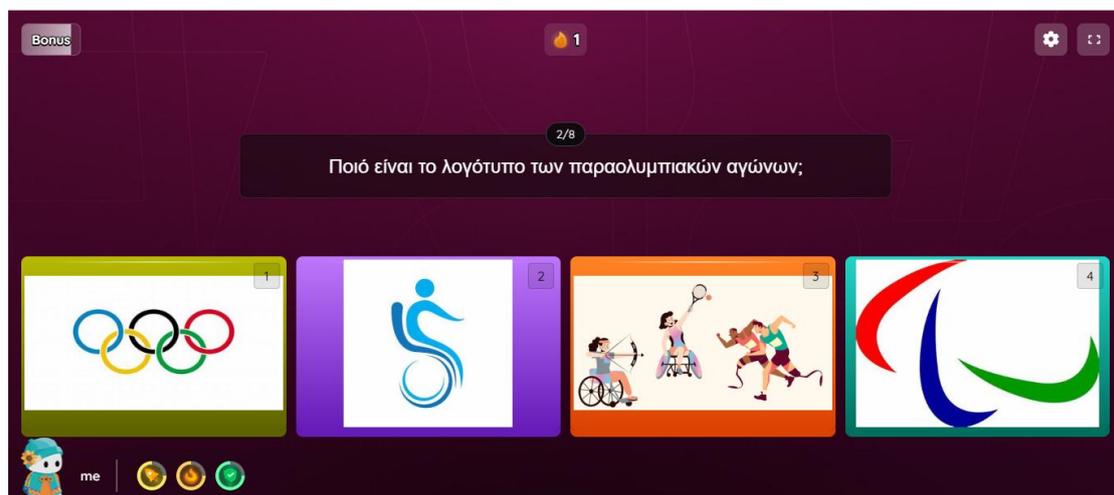
### Activity 5 (3')

Students will watch the following video regarding Paralympic sports.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=746FyMh1Tts&pp=ygUrZ4DOscBzrHOv867z4XOvMAzrnOsc66zqwgzrHOuM67zq7OvM6xz4TOsQ%3D%3D>

### Activity 6 (10')

At the end of the teaching hour, students will answer a short digital quiz (In Greek language) regarding disability and Paralympic sports.



- <https://quizizz.com/join/quiz/6828c5750350f58e553ae6a4/start?studentShare=true>

### Phase 2 (2st teaching hour)

Wheelchair basketball

Wheelchair basketball is a Paralympic sport for individuals with mobility impairments, primarily in the lower limbs. It is played on a standard basketball court with the same

dimensions and hoop height, but athletes use specialized wheelchairs that allow for quick movements and maneuvers. They are allowed to push the wheelchair twice before performing a dribble, pass or shot (equivalent to the steps).

### **Activity 1 (6')**

Introductory part: in a designated area, students are asked to run on a route with various alternatives given. Specifically, students should adapt their running according to the orders given each time by the PE teacher (e.g. walking, running, fast running, changing direction, bouncing, side steps, etc.). Each time a new order is given, they must perform the activity without stopping. Finally, the changes will be made every 15-20 seconds.

### **Activity 2 (4')**

The students are divided into 8 pairs and sit on chairs, 3-4 metres apart. Each pair will have one ball and depending on the acoustic stimulus they will perform the specific type of pass (e.g. 1 clap means a chest pass, 2 claps means a chunky pass and 1 whistle means an overhead pass).

Modification: In case of difficulty, the distance between the chairs will be reduced or the pair will be given a lighter ball.

### **Activity 3 (6')**

On the basketball court there are 8 + 8 desk chairs with wheels on each side, which will be placed at various points and distances. The students are divided into 4 groups of four and 2 of them will be on each side of the court. After the students sit in their chairs, they should re-enact sitting basketball, having a ball and passing it to each other. After a short period of time the positions of the players will change.

Modification: In case of difficulty, the students' chairs will be placed in more favorable positions, so that the students can facilitate the game.

### **Activity 4 (6')**

The students are divided into four groups of four and each group forms a circle of four individuals sitting on the ground. The students remain seated and pass the ball in a circle between them. The aim is to keep the ball in the air.

Modification: In case of difficulty, students will be able to catch the ball and then pass it.

### **Activity 5 (5')**

Students are divided into two groups of eight and seated in a starting line (separate for each group). At the start signal the students should move to the finish point (10m) using their hands. Finally, the winner is the student who manages to reach the finish line first (one winner from each team).

Modification: In case of difficulty the finishing distance will be reduced.

### **Sitting volleyball**

Sitting volleyball, a modified version of traditional volleyball, is played with athletes seated on a smaller court and a lower net. Players must maintain contact with the ground throughout the game, and teams consist of six athletes. The sport is aimed at individuals with disabilities in the lower limbs, such as amputations or paraplegia. The basic rules are similar to those of stand-up volleyball, with adjustments to maintain balance and competitiveness.

#### **Activity 6 (8')**

Exercise description: On a modified seated volleyball court, students are divided into two groups of 6, which will re-enact the Paralympic sport. Throughout the game there will be changes to the players. Finally, the team that manages to collect the most points will win.

Modification: In case students find it difficult to perform activities, additional players will be added.

#### **Activity 7 (10')**

Students are divided into two groups. During each round, a designated student from each team will draw a card illustrating a Paralympic sport and subsequently present a silent mime interpretation. Participants will have 30 seconds to identify the Paralympic sport. Whichever team guesses correctly gets one point. The team with the most points at the conclusion of the competition is the winner.

### **Phase 3 (3rd teaching hour)**

#### **Boccia**

Boccia is a game of strategy and precision. This is intended for individuals with significant motor impairments, including cerebral palsy. Participants propel spheres toward a designated target ball. Players may compete individually, in pairs, or as teams.

#### **Activity 1 (5')**

The PE teacher divides the court or room into four corners, which he or she numbers from 1 to 4. All students stand in the centre of the room. On the whistle or cue, the teacher calls out a number (e.g. "Corner 3!") and the students have to run as fast as possible to the correct corner. Participants can make the activity faster by performing a quick exercise before starting the next round, with the instructor shouting numbers continuously.

Modification: In case students find it difficult to perform activities they can walk fast instead of running.

#### **Activity 2 (5')**

Students are divided into 2 groups of 8 and placed in two rows, each group behind a starting line. In front of each group, two cones are placed about 1 metre apart, forming a "corridor". The aim of the exercise is for each student to throw a Boccia ball while sitting down, trying to

pass between the two cones without touching them. The distance from the cones will change after everyone has completed their attempt. The exercise alternates: one student from each group performs the throw and returns back. When everyone has finished, the successful attempts of each team are counted and the team with the “cleanest” throws is declared the winner.

Modification: If students have difficulty in performing activities the distance between the cones will be increased.

### **Activity 3 (7')**

Students are divided into 4 teams of four (Team A, Team B, Team C and Team D). Two Boccia courts are set up so that two games can be played simultaneously. On the first court, Team A will play against Team B, and on the second court, Team C will play against Team D. Each student throws one ball per round, alternating with their opponents, trying to get their ball as close as possible to the cue ball (jack). After 3 rounds (foot, hand and head), the team that had the closest balls to the target wins.

Modification: In case students find it difficult to perform the activities, they can choose how to throw the ball.

### **Activity 4 (5')**

Students are divided into 8 pairs. One student from each pair will wear a mask or eye patch so that they have no eye contact with the room. The other student takes on the role of the driver, giving voice instructions (e.g. "go ahead", "left", "stop") so that the classmate can move safely in a designated corridor. The goal is to safely approach a sound source, such as a bell or a goalball. In this round there will be no obstacles, so students can concentrate solely on the auditory guidance.

Modification: In case students find it difficult to carry out the activities, the assistant can intervene more.

### **Activity 5 (6')**

Students are divided into 4 groups of 4 and placed opposite each other, forming two pairs of corridors. That is, group 1 will be opposite group 2, and group 3 opposite group 4, with a distance of about 6-8 meters between them. The opposing team tries to block the ball with the body, by falling sideways or using hands/feet, without getting up from the ground. The activity continues with a rotation of players so that everyone is actively involved as both offensive and defensive players.

Modification: To facilitate student participation, supplementary personnel will be incorporated into the defense.

### **Goalball**

Goalball is a Paralympic team sport designed for individuals with visual impairments. It involves two teams of three players who, wearing masks that block their vision, sit in front of their goal and try to block a special ball containing bells with their bodies, using only their hearing. The goal of each team is to roll the ball on the ground with power and accuracy, so that it passes the opposing defenders and ends up in their goal.

### **Activity 6 (7')**

The teams are divided into pairs (1 to 2 and 3 to 4) and placed on two landscaped courts. Each team has three competitors, plus a fourth student who substitutes or helps with organization. The students, wearing the masks, perform rolling throws and deflections of the ball, while the teacher gives feedback, reinforcing cooperation and participation.

Modification: In case a group has difficulty in performing the activities, a fourth student can be added.

### **Activity 7 (10')**

#### Treasure Hunt with Paralympic Sports Puzzles

Students are divided into small groups and move from station to station, where they have to solve puzzles to progress. The area is divided into 5 to 7 stations, where each station has a card with a puzzle related to a Paralympic sport.

The teams start from the first station. Upon review and deliberation, they successfully solved the puzzle. Accurate responses facilitate advancement to the subsequent checkpoint. The first team to correctly solve all station puzzles wins.

Examples of puzzles:

1. In this sport, visually impaired athletes use a ball that hits rattles and wear eye masks. Which sport are we talking about? (Answer: Goalball).
2. What is this sport called; How many balls do they use in Boccia? (Answer: 13).

### **Expansions**

The integration of Paralympic sports in the school environment offers unique opportunities for the development of emotional intelligence, social awareness and cooperation among students. This teaching proposal can be taught from the first grades of primary school, where children can begin to understand the importance of inclusion, solidarity and sporting respect, concepts that are naturally integrated through these sports as an action in school on the theme "Paralympic Day". The planned activities and competitions will afford students the opportunity to recognize the potential of individuals with disabilities, foster collaboration, and understand how diversity enhances rather than hinders success. The presence of athletes with disabilities as trainers or mentors offers students an authentic and experiential experience, making them understand the real meaning of the concept of "inclusion" in practice. In addition, sporting events, even at young ages such as primary school, offer students the opportunity to participate in fun and educational activities that enhance their social skills. Sports festivals and games,

involving students with and without disabilities, help to create an inclusive environment where cooperation and mutual aid are the key ingredients for success.

These activities encourage students to see difference not as something negative, but as an opportunity to learn and grow with others. The use of ICT can play an important role in this process. Through the use of digital tools, students can monitor their progress in different activities and compare their performance, not to compete, but to understand the importance of personal improvement and participation. This enhances the sense of interaction between them, as students learn to value the process and not only the outcome. Developing inter-school cooperation and organizing joint sports events at the level of the municipality or even the district can offer a larger number of students the opportunity to participate in activities that promote cooperation and integration. Such initiatives create a strong social network, through which students can learn to cooperate with their peers from different schools, exchange experiences and create new friendships based on respect and understanding. Engaging in sports that promote the concept of equality, cooperation, and solidarity helps students understand that everyone has equal worth and the ability to succeed, regardless of any limitations they may have. Individuals are encouraged to cultivate respect for diversity and the sporting values of mutual support and respect in their daily routines.

### 3.0 CONCLUSIONS

Integrating Paralympic sports into school physical education programs presents valuable opportunities to foster equality, solidarity, and social inclusion. Students with and without disabilities cultivate collaborative, communicative, and inclusive skills through athletic participation, thereby demonstrating that disability does not preclude the attainment of ambitious objectives. Furthermore, integrating ICT into the pedagogy of these sports enhances inclusive participation, enabling students to track their progress and comprehend strategies using digital resources. The integration of Paralympic sports within the school curriculum cultivates a culture of inclusivity and teamwork, proving that athletic participation and success are attainable for all students, regardless of physical limitations.

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

### 1. Disabilities: How to Cope With Them & Support Others

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjvmAUbfXdw&pp=ygUzZGlzYWJpbGl0aWVzIGhvdYB0byBjb3JlIHdpdGggdGhlcSAmIHN1cHBvcnQgb3RoZXJz>

2. Disability and Child Protection | UNICEF

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SzazN2OrsQ&pp=ygUfZGlzYWJpbG10eSBhbmQgY2hpbGQgcHJvdGVjdGlvbG%3D%3D>

3. What Are Disabilities?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F4Hp0N\\_A1Q&pp=ygUVd2hhdCBhcmUgZGlzYWJpbG10aWVz0gcJCYYYJAYcqIYzv](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F4Hp0N_A1Q&pp=ygUVd2hhdCBhcmUgZGlzYWJpbG10aWVz0gcJCYYYJAYcqIYzv)

4. Best Moments - France FR | Paris 2024 Paralympic Games

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM2TcfPyAfY&pp=ygUuYmVzdCBtb21lbnRzIGZyYW5jZSBwYXJpcyAyMDI0IHBhcmFseW1waWMgZ2FtZQ%3D%3D>

5. Para Athletics Highlights | Paris 2024 Paralympic Games

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xddkeA6fstw&pp=ygUuYmVzdCBtb21lbnRzIGZyYW5jZSBwYXJpcyAyMDI0IHBhcmFseW1waWMgZ2FtZdIHCQmGCQGHKiGM7w%3D%3D>

6. Paralympic Sports

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=746FyMh1Tts&pp=ygUr4DOsc-BzrHOv867z4XOvMAzrnOsc66zqwgzrHOuM67zq7OvM6xz4TOsQ%3D%3D>