



The Challenge of Inclusion

□ GREG SACK, OCIN



Erin assists Special Ed student Jacen in orienting the map. Once they identified where they were on the map, he had little trouble identifying the correct control.

(Below, right) Mike demonstrates that wheelchair bound students should also benefit from orienteering activities.

The challenge actually was set for me back in January at the Navigator Cup. That was when I messed up by not checking out the Trail-O. When I saw the pictures of the event it became clear that this was an important, but under-utilized activity.

Then there was the call from the TV station that is planning a new kid's show for next year. After going round and round they became most interested in a suggested activity that involves chalk on a school parking lot. Among the reasons this seemed appealing was the fact that it could be so inclusive.

The proverbial lightning bolt was the request by a publisher of a Geometry textbook for a picture of a kid in a wheelchair using a map and compass. After a flurry of e-mails and phone calls it became apparent that there just weren't many such pictures out there.

Why not? In this day of emphasis on "Inclusion" and IEPs many teachers are stressed about finding activities. Many teachers don't want to deal with these specialized demands. We, as mostly pedi-mobile orienteers, tend to overlook those people with special needs.

We are not alone. This situation needs to be grappled with by the whole of society. Cincinnati's Flying Pig Marathon

(not to be confused with the Flying Pig Orienteering A-Meet) has races for kids the day before the marathon and every kid that participates gets a ribbon. It was up to a creative dad to come up with a solution for his daughter with a broken leg. He pushed her across the lawn in a wheelchair for her race to her great delight.

We could all use a dose of such dogged ingenuity in making sure that everyone gets a chance to participate. As a sport, Orienteering can lead the way. Our sport has already demonstrated its leadership capabilities in environmental awareness. It is also a credit to the sport that we have Trail-O Championships. Local clubs should strive to have Trail-Os or other "All Persons" components to local events as well as A meets.

Those of us who bring orienteering to students need to keep those with special needs in mind. It is too easy to forget those Special Ed classes downstairs. On any given day there are a portion of students needing temporary locomotive assistance as well. There is no reason we can't bring the thinking part of this "Thinking Person's Running Sport" to every student no matter what their handicap might be.

As my Special Ed teacher friend Melissa says "I am constantly surprised by what my students can do." Orienteering

has been used to teach many concepts. It makes a good teaching tool because it naturally acts as a bridge from the objective, or concrete, experience to the abstract concept.

The parking lot map game mentioned earlier is a good case in point. This exercise requires that the class be divided into teams of about eight. Each team marks a circle big enough for the whole team to fit inside of. The teams then mark the north/south and east/west lines through the circle.

Scattered around the grounds are 8 to 10 controls, each visible from 2 other controls. There should be only two controls visible from the circles. Have the students count their strides over 10 yards. Wheelchair wheels can be marked so rotations can be counted. This way they can measure the distance between controls.

The teams are then subdivided into working groups. The groups take different legs to record compass bearings, distances and angles each pair of legs makes. They then bring this information back to the parking lot where they plot the course to scale.

This can and should be an Inclusive activity. Each student can contribute according to ability; each can learn from the others in their group; each can build mental agility.

Ultimately it is the thinking part of our sport that makes it a natural fit in the curriculum. And we all think. □



Photos by Greg Sack

Please share your experiences in bringing orienteering to kids. Send articles and pictures to the address at the front of this magazine, or e-mail Greg Sack at: raphic@fuse.net -ed.

