



Cap sur l'école inclusive
en Europe



Best Practice

Suggesting a game to a child with a disability

Section of the module /Educate

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1. Context

Institutions for Young Children aged from 6 months to 6 years

2. Goals

It is not always clear which game or toy to suggest to a child with a disability. The professional must be attentive to different criteria in order to make a suitable proposal, safe and secure, conducive to autonomous play.

This sheet answers the questions that arise in the proposal of a game to a child with a disability in a context of free play:

- How to identify the player's needs?
- How to identify the player's skills?
- How to arrange the space according to the child's disorder?
- How to choose a toy based on the child's disorder?
- What is the role of the professional?
- How to store the game / toy?

3. "Best practice" conduct

- **Team composition:**

Teacher and / or AVS (Auxiliaire de Vie Scolaire, i.e. Auxiliary for School Life), AES (Accompagnant Educatif et Social, i.e. Educational and Social Support), Childcare Auxiliary, Educator for Young Children, Nurse trained in child care etc ..

Step 1

Identifying the player's needs

Playing, a right and a need. A child with a disability is above all a child.

As a child, playing is a fundamental right, as the 31st article of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989):

"States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child. "

In addition to being a right, playing is a necessity for every child because it promotes the self-fulfilment and development of the individual.

Depending on the time of the day, on the child's skills and pace but also on his / her personality and interests, the player's needs may vary.

The same fun activity can meet one or several needs of the child:

- moving one's body;
- exploring and experimenting with the senses and through manipulations;
- imitating;
- exercising one's power;
- repeating;
- being together;
- etc.

It must be recognized that it's impossible to read a child's mind and to be sure of what he/she wants to play with, often even more in welcoming a child with disabilities.

On the other hand, the professional must make available various supports in order to satisfy the different needs for fun.

Depending on the disability, the child is more or less able to meet his/her needs for fun independently. The professional must pay particular attention. You can ask yourself different questions in order to target the child's need.

What environment is the child in?

Is he / she in a calm or busy environment, but especially how does he / she perceive this environment? Does he / she seem scared or rather interested? If the child seems uncomfortable, suggest a quieter and containing environment.

If he / she is interested, invite him / her to be an actor of the game (if it is not already the case).

In what position / posture is he / she?

Is he / she comfortably installed?

Make sure his / her position is relevant to his / her action on the environment.

What are his / her relationships to others?

Do you observe visual, verbal, bodily interactions with other children?

Are these interactions positive or negative?

Be sure to foster positive interactions, without forcing the relationship.

Where does the child look?

The object of the child's gaze can be a good indicator of what interests him / her.

Warning. These questions allow you to have indications on the child's experience at a precise moment, but you must also link them with the other moments of the day (did the child stay all day in the same posture, etc.?).

Step 2

Identifying the player's skills

Rather than focusing on the child's troubles and disabilities, consider what he / she can do.

The involved skills concern the following areas:

- fine motor skills: what can the player easily catch and manipulate?
- gross motor skills: how does he / she move?
- symbolic thought: is he / she capable of imitating, of pretending? Does he / she use oral expression?
- affectivity: does he / she show interest in a particular object or theme? Or, on the contrary, a rejection or a fear?

Relationship to others:

What can be said about the child's relationship to others?

Is he / she in search, avoiding, indifferent, etc?

Warning! Be careful not to put the child in a situation of failure.

Step 3

Arranging space

Rules for arranging each space:

The space layout is essential to allow each of the children to play. Basic principles must be respected:

- diversity of spaces;
- delimited spaces;
- ventilated spaces;
- ready-to-play spaces.

Each play area has special layout rules.

- the space dedicated to sensory games and manipulation, the exercise mat
- the construction game area
- the motor skills play area

Welcoming a child with a disability requires specific arrangements depending on the disorders and / or deficiencies.

For a child with hearing impairment:

- Allow the child to observe other players to foster interactions.

For a child with a motor disability:

- Ventilated open spaces to allow the child to manoeuvre and / or move with or without his / her equipment or wheelchair.
- Adapted furniture to allow the child to manoeuvre and / or move with or without his equipment or wheelchair.

Think, for example, to raise a table to allow the child to slide his / her legs under the table when he / she is in his / her wheelchair or to use tables with raised edges to prevent game elements from falling on the ground.

For a child with a mental disability:

- Restricted and containing spaces are reassuring.

For a child with visual impairment:

- Provide stable tactile landmarks to help situating oneself in space.

For a child with behavioural problems:

- Ventilated open spaces to satisfy motor needs.
- Containing and restricted spaces to reassure.

Step 4

Choosing a toy

"Pleasure being the driving force of the game, the good toy can be defined as the one that solicits the player, creates the desire to play, then to play again." The Handilud Guide, FM2J Editions, 2007. It is essential to question the skills and needs of the player (see steps 1 and 2) before choosing a toy. You must also pay attention to the characteristics of the object. It is obvious that the age indicated on the toy box does not apply to a child with a disability.

Selection criteria of the game / toy:

The Quai des Ludes games library team (games librarians, psychologists, etc.) has defined selection criteria as part of the Handilud guide. We have selected the following ones in the context of welcoming children with disabilities:

- highly pleasurable fun in play, originality, interest of the object;
- consistency between different aspects of the game or toy, so that the player would not feel in difficulty;
- good quality and robustness of the toy;
- toy safety;
- handiness: a toy that is easy to catch and handle. The toy must solicit only one movement at a time to make it work;
- strong sensory elements;
- ease of maintenance.

Also, depending on the disability, certain characteristics are to be preferred.

For a child with hearing impairment:

- Various visual effects.
- Simple rules: the player must be able to understand them through a demonstration with the material and possibly other children playing.
- Original sensory effects: vibrations, magnetic effect, unusual materials, etc.

For a child with a motor disability:

- Object easy to catch and handle: appropriate sizes and shapes of the game elements.
- Simple triggering without precise gesture or force.
- Think of toys presented vertically that allow people to play in a small space.
- Stable and light toys.
- Toys that do not roll too far, in order to allow the player to recover it easily if he /she drops it.
- Simple assemblies.
- Original and surprising sensory effects.

For a child with a mental disability:

- Toys easy to handle and to trigger.
- Toys that promote the relationship: for example, a ball that is rolled toward the child and that invites him / her to return it.
- Simple elements and assembly systems.
- Surprising manipulations.
- Short games and simple rules.

For a child with visual impairment:

- Various sound effects.
- Large and raised objects.
- Representative material: a child must be able to recognize the object by manipulating it.
- Original sensory effects: vibrations, magnetism, unusual materials, etc.

For a child with behavioural problems:

- Gaming supports to express his / her aggressiveness or his / her fears (tension outlets) without danger.
- Toys that promote relationship.
- Short games, simple rules.
- Action supports that do not require sitting.

Step 5**Accompanying the game**

Children need to play under the benevolent gaze of the adult. A child with a disability requires a presence that is all the more attentive. As a professional, you are the guarantor of his / her physical and emotional security. Some elements require particular attention:

- the toy should be adapted to the player's skills;
- the child should not experience failure or be in difficulty;
- the child should always be a player in his / her game;
- temper frustrations and help the child overcome difficulties;
- foster relationships with others.

Step 6

Storing the game / toy

Warn the player that the game session is going to be over soon. It is important to allow him / her to anticipate rather than passively endure events. This can be done in two stages ("in 10 minutes, we'll stop ", " in 5 minutes, we'll stop "). Also, you can announce what will follow to the child.

Depending on the child's abilities, invite him or her to help you store the toy (s). You can put a photo of the toy to tell the child where to store it.

Make sure the toy is clean and dry before storing it. As with all toys, feel free to use a specific filing system to organize your stock.

The classification of play objects offers a major advantage in the fact that it is based on the development of the individual, and not by age or sex, which would be simplistic or even discriminating.

Our advice

- Let the child with a disability observe the other children play: this is a first stage in the appropriation of the game or the toy.
- Use pictograms or photos in the case of children with mental disorders: whether it is for storing toys or for setting benchmarks over time.
- Laminate the cardboard game elements: this is to prolong the life of the game object and to facilitate its maintenance.

Avoid mistakes

- Don't impose a game or a toy: as for all children, the game must remain free. In other words, the player can choose his / her game and decide to stop playing whenever he / she wants.
- Do not make systematic suggestions: it is not because a child likes a toy that it will be suitable for another child with the same disorder. Consider the personality, rhythms, needs and skills of the child.
- Do not offer toys with random effects: the child needs a stable and reassuring environment. He / she needs to anticipate. The surprising effects must be the fruit of a controlled action of the player.
- Avoid moving furniture around, especially in the context of welcoming a visually impaired child. If you are compelled to do so, accompany the player in the discovery of the new space, highlighting the landmarks elements that you have made available for him / her.
- Avoid doing things in place of the child: if it may be relevant when the child is having difficulty, it should be ensured that the situation does not happen again.

Example:

What can be done when a disabled child participates in a group game, such as a board game for example, but does not wait for his / her turn and has difficulty throwing the dice or handling cards or pawns?

It is not easy to let him / her do things that are forbidden to others.

According to this example, the game seems not to be adapted to the player's skills.

It is preferable that the child does not find him or herself in a situation of failure. In other words, avoid offering a game that requires skills superior to those of the child.

You can also adapt the game to give him / her a place. Other children are quite capable of accepting specific rules if they make sense and are clearly explained.

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