

Presentation Transcript

Topic: Start them young - Young Athletes Programme

Speaker: Kevan Lee, St Anthony's Canossian Secondary School
& Linda Prebhash, Rainbow Centre

Linda: Hi, good morning to all of you. My name is Linda. And, I'm here to share with you a movement and a programme, Special Olympics called the Young Athletes Programme.

Now, this segment. Who is it for? For those of you who come from the mainstream school, you may be a teacher, you may be a leader in the mainstream school. Listen attentively, there are so many things that you can get from this programme for your students to grow in their characters and develop their values. If you are a parent, of a person with special needs, this is the programme for you. Your young child, younger than seven years old, can come and enjoy the program together with us. With their sisters, their brothers, their parents, and the grandparents and the cousins. Right.

So, let's start. Special Olympics is really for family. We want families to come together to participate together, because the idea is sports is for all. So, let's watch young athletes in action.

So, what does the Young Athletes Programme benefit our young athletes? Well, there are so many benefits. The first one, of course, is motor skills. Now in participating in these activities, in a fun way, they don't really think about what they're doing. But actually, they're practicing all their motor skills.

Then also, in a programme like this, they need to interact with their volunteers, they need to interact with their siblings, they need to engage with other young athletes. And so, they practice their social emotional skills, of turn taking, of waiting, of asking, of losing, of winning. So, these are some of the benefits. Then, of course, we have the expectations, you as parents of young athletes, maybe you think, your child may not be able to excel in sports.

Well, come to this programme, Special Olympics Young Athletes Programme will show you, your young athletes can do so much if you just give them the opportunities. Of course, Young Athletes is also the platform where we are trying to prepare them for sports in later years. In these formative years, it is learning about basic fundamental skills, these basic fundamental skills, will then move on to sport skills like bowling, floorball, soccer, all the sports. So, this is the stepping point for them.

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Of course, we are also looking at young athletes, having a platform for acceptance, for all persons involved in the programme to understand that we all live together in this community. And, we can all work together. It's acceptance and being creating an inclusive society.

So really, if you think you're a parent, and you don't know anything about sports, rest assured, go into the Special Olympics international website, there are so many resources for you, for you to access for you to read, for you to watch videos. So, in the resources, there is this introductory information.

There is also another page where you have activity guides, so a description of what kind of activities you can do with your children. There are also videos that you can access, watch them and they are really short clips, easy to follow videos. There's also a curriculum, a curriculum that's available for everybody to access to look at and to see where your young athletes are, and to move from there. There's also some information if you are wanting to be a coach for young athletes. There is some information where you can read and then you can watch.

And of course, for our families. How Young Athletes bond a family together, what you can do as a family together, all these resources and videos are available in the website.

So, really, Special Olympics' Young Athletes Programme is for everybody. If you are from a school, a mainstream school, I encourage you to open up your school, get a couple of your students, and we will provide you with the athletes, we will provide you with some trainings and you can start a Young Athletes Programme there. Know that you are going to make a difference. And after, you are going to hear Kevan, he is going to share the experience from his school and his students. After hearing from him, I am very sure every school is wanting to jump on this bandwagon to have a Young Athletes Programme in your school. If you have a Young Athletes Programme in your school, know that you are going to reach athletes, and you are going to build up the values in your own students.

So, at the end of this Young Athletes Programme, we have something called a Ribbons Day, and that's a celebration. A celebration of everybody coming together. Of course, the key figure is the young athlete himself or herself. This is where he or she gets to demonstrate his skills. And then, the parents get to see a wonderful achievement of the athletes have done.

And, the volunteer. Well, the volunteers get to see their achievements of over through this period, what they the young athletes have achieved. So really, volunteers, we are looking for more schools, we are looking for more centers, because we truly believe in the Young Athletes movement. We really want this to be in every part of Singapore. So, listen out for Kevin, and his experiences from his students. And, we hope to hear from you soon, Kevan.

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Kevan: Hi, everyone. My name is Kevan. Thank you so much for taking time off to come and attend my sharing.

So, the title my sharing is the best lesson in life happens outside the classroom. And, through my sharing I wish to share what I tried with my students through the VIA programme that my school partnered with Special Olympics.

Alright, so what I do for a living for about 16% of my life, I'm the secondary school mathematics teacher. As a sports enthusiast as well, I'm privileged to be a teacher in charge of badminton, handball, and most recently floorball. In school as well, I'm in the committee, VIA committee, which stands for Values In Action. Where we plan year-round VIA programme for students from across the level, the stream and so on. In the picture, it's a silly picture of me dressed in Pac-man. Because I strive to make an impact to my students, and hence, my Teachers' Day attire. I don't wear this on a normal basis. But, just on Teachers' Day in 2015.

So more about me, Kevan in 3,2,1. That is how you spell my name as well. I'm proud uncle of 3. The oldest niece being in JC 1 this year, have another one is Sec 3 and also another one in Sec 1. I'm a proud father of two as well. So, most recently, I welcomed my son, very young, his name is Young as well. And, I'm also a proud husband of one. No, definitely only one.

So, little more about me as a volunteer. So, besides teaching, I'm an avid volunteer as well. So, throughout my time as a teenager, I'm active with my volunteering across different organization, different causes. In the local scene, I did free tuition with my alma mater, Changkai Changi Secondary School. Also, Beyond Social Services and Singapore Prison Services as well. I did a few Flag Day with Apex Harmony Lodge and ACRES. Through doing Flag Day that kind of formulate what kind of educator I hope my students would experience in terms of the VIA programme that they choose to embark on.

So, how it all begin back in 2017, when I was in charge of the Badminton CCA, I decided to look for CCA VIA for badminton. So, a friend of mine introduced me to his friend, who is also a volunteer in Special Olympics Badminton Outreach. So, after hitting down to the session, we decided to partner Special Olympics for two programmes. One, is the Badminton Outreach and the other one, is the Young Athletes Programme. As you can see in the photos on the next slide.

So, we already got those who are interested to volunteer to come first. And in the photos, you can see them having fun through team bonding and also having fun with group photo at the end of the Young Athlete session. So, some of the questions that they will ask me would be, and I'm open to questions being asked by the students. One of it is like, "Wah, Mr. Lee! I thought we come here to teach them badminton, how come they are stronger than us?". Well, some of the athletes are learning, still learning badminton skills and so on, but some of the athletes in the Outreach are skillful and that it is a humbling experience for my students as well. In the Young Athletes Programme, students are also asked me "Mr. Lee, why this child looks like this? Why this child behaves in a certain way?" and all these we would

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have a discussion towards the end of the session. And, I find all these discussion very rich for their learning as well.

Alright, so moving on to 2018 more students signed up. So, this is a group photo of a lot more students for the Young Athletes Programme. And, on the bottom left, you can see my niece, which is why you I shared with you that I'm a proud Uncle, really getting my niece, my family members to be on board with what I'm doing as well.

So, 2019, beyond just my CCA, badminton, we got the whole school, those who are interested across from Sec 1 to Sec 4, regardless of CCA, whether you're from the Sports CCA, whether you're from the Uniformed Group, Performing Arts and so on, to just join to experience the Young Athletes Programme. And so, this is the programme that they had back in 2019. And, with this experience, they hit the street to get people to donate on Flag Day. And, when they are sharing with the public, what they do on their session? What's the experience like? And, who are the donating for? What's the cost? What is the purpose of it? And, they were able to share the experience much more adequately.

So, a lot more programmes we partnered with Special Olympics in 2019. We partnered with Play Inclusive. Where some of my students were athlete buddies. And some of my students were competition officials.

Last year was a challenging year for all of us, because we can't do face to face interactions. So, we had to go online. Circuit Breaker (CB). We did our Badminton Outreach online. So, that got me thinking. Why not Young Athletes online as well?

So, let's have a look at a video of having Young Athletes online, something like a e-CCA, whereby students stand in front of the screen, the athletes are in front of their screen at home, us in school, doing sports together doing exercises together. Enjoy the video.

So, what you see in the video is the actual day. What has happened. In terms of the activities, the programme, but behind the scenes, there were a lot of planning, and there were a lot of organisation. So, first of all, would be the logistics. Laptop, speakers, chargers and DSLRs. All these got to be ready. I'm kind of blessed that I was the e-supervisor for my oral examination, because it's all about setting up the venue and getting everything ready, so that the programme can be run smoothly. So, what you see in the picture there, is really the laptops, which we use for our online zoom session, and also the speakers so that we can hear what the athletes are saying and so on.

If you fail to plan, you're planning to fail. This is something I believe strongly. So, I got my students to really sit down together to think about the kind of exercises, the kinds of activities that they want the athletes to experience on the day. So, what they did is they did a bit of research online, they look at various resources across, YouTube, Facebook, some of them created a Facebook account just to check out some of the sports group that they do for young kids, exercises for young kids. And, they

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wrote down their lesson plan on a butcher sheet. As what you can see in the photo, is them refining what they want to say, what they want to execute on the actual day itself.

They applied what they learnt as well, because they know that, having young kids as their audience, they might not be able to too much words that they are saying. So, they printed out illustrations, pictures to show to the athletes via the camera. So that, when they are saying the storyline, like elephants are big, so they can know 'Oh! Elephants!'. So, that is a picture of the elephant. And, you're supposed to know spread your hands out wide for their stretching. So, this is really applying what they learnt.

We are fortunate to have Linda and Tiffany from Special Olympics to do a crash course my students as well. So that they can level up know as a volunteer

And, they came one and a half hour much earlier, before the actual session, to rehearse, to test the camera, to test the audio, to test the visual and to anticipate any problems that may happen. Thankfully, we found out there was a power trip in the hall. Because the laptops weren't charging, and we started panicking and we got it resolved right before the session. Everything was good. So, really coming much earlier to troubleshoot for any potential issues that may happen.

Along the way you can plan for everything you want in the world but if the athlete is not following, if the athlete is not finding it fun, they are not interested. Then it defeats the purpose. The whole idea of the activities planned. So, my students were told to be flexible. My students were told to adjust accordingly to the child's, the athlete's ability and interest. When I talk about athlete's ability, it is not necessary that they can't follow. But, some of them may be too advanced for the ballgame. May be too advanced for the exercise. So, they have to adapt, adapt to the athlete's ability so that, the athlete can feel the challenge, can feel the stretch, and eventually enjoy the session.

So, what you see in the slides, some of the athletes enjoyed dancing more. So, this group on the top left, they did a lot more dancing as compared to what they have planned originally. Some preferred the ball game a lot more. And also, some preferred static exercises. So, on the right, it is really storytelling, illustrating a trip to the Zoo. How some of the animals are moving and getting athletes to move together with them as well.

So, this slide you see is on the last session. The athletes actually requested for gummy bear dance. gummy bear dance, "We want a gummy bear dance again!". So, we did a gummy bear dance on the second session, and the kids enjoyed it such that , they requested for the gummy bear dance again on the last session. So, it is not part of the last session's plan. But, my students were able to improvise and load one of the YouTube video on the left of the screen and able to follow the dance and show the athletes and athletes enjoyed it. So, we're thankful that my students were able to improvise on the spot.

Typically, after every session, what we do is we have a reflection, and it is important for all the participants to talk about their experience, to raise all the questions that they have collated throughout,

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and we answer them. And, we listen to each other's perspectives so that we can all grow as volunteers. So, this is a quick reflection from Aqeelah sent from WhatsApp. So, let me read this out to you. "There was still 20 minutes left after we had completed what we initially planned. Hence, I was very proud as we improvised on the spot by adding a ball activity game and also managed to get to know more about the athlete".

So, this is Aadi, first time volunteering with Special Olympics. So, she said that " I think the athletes I interacted with, were able to teach me so much more when it came to not giving up, adjusting to be out of your comfort zone and how they were willing to try something new, since it is done virtually for the first time".

And, the last one, Samantha. Samantha is a second year volunteer with us. Last year, she did Young Athletes Programme as well. So, she came back this year again, hoping to make a difference, because last year, she felt that she wasn't too active a volunteer. So, this is a second goal. So, this was what she shared with me. She shared that Nadia, who is the athlete's sister, "has helped me with being more patient with younger children, I wanted to learn more about different children, different types of children and learn how to take care of them, teach them and get closer with them so that I can build my relationship with my younger brother who also has down syndrome." So, all these kinds of sharing and reflection are very rich to the learning of every volunteer because as we learn from each other, as we understand what's running through their mind, we are able to level up collectively.

So, in summary, what I feel about volunteering is, it is definitely good to start young, as young as Sec 1, some of my better volunteers came from sec 1, contrary to the idea that, "Oh, no, are they able to handle the maturity of what we are doing here?" But they bring so much innocence and so much passion to what they do. So, it is alright to start young. And, when we are volunteering, it is not so much about me helping them. "I'm a volunteer, you're the beneficiary." And, so on. What I always tell my students is that, focus on building the relationship, it is not so much about them knowing how to do a chest pass, it is not so much about them knowing how to do a bounce pass. Build on a relationship, get to know them, make friends with them first. Instead of calling them beneficiary, call them buddy, athletes. Respect them for who they are. And, ask question, don't judge and do not assume that they don't know this and so on. Respect each other, we are all human beings

So, my hope for the future is to narrow down the bathtub effect of volunteerism. And that, students will continue to volunteer even as they enter the workforce.

If you wish to collaborate with me, do take a photo of my email address. I know it's quite hard to write it down. And, I look forward to know your questions. Thank you so much.