

**GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI  
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION BRANCH  
AMRITA SHERGIL SCHOOL BUILDING  
BEHIND LADY SHRI RAM COLLEGE,  
LAJPAT NAGAR-IV, NEW DELHI-110024**

No. F.236/DDE(IEB)/Admn.Cell/SS/2023/ 6241-6246

Dated: 31/07/2023

**CIRCULAR**

Section 16 (i) of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 provides that *all educational institutions shall admit children with disabilities (CWDs) without discrimination and provide education & opportunities for sports & recreation activities equally with others.*

In the line of same, Modern School, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi has initiated 'Sportsability' to promote inclusion and offer ample opportunities' to CWDs for enhancing their ability & talent in sports activities. This initiative has lead to the creation of an inclusive model Sports Academy offering accessible & adaptable sports & recreational facilities for benefiting students with physical & neurological challenges. It involves adapted sports such as:

- Sitting volleyball
- Wheelchair tennis
- Blind sports
- Wheelchair basketball
- Amputee badminton and table tennis etc.

All Govt., Aided & Private Unaided Recognised schools of Directorate of Education, GNCTD, are encouraged to take up such initiatives for bringing inclusion in the true spirit in our society.



**(HIMANSHU GUPTA)  
DIRECTOR (EDUCATION)  
Dated: 31/07/2023**

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1. P.S. to Secretary (Education), GNCTD
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4. All DDE (Districts) & DDE (Zones), Directorate of Education, GNCTD
5. **All HoS/Manager of Govt., Aided & Private Unaided Recognised schools of Directorate of Education, GNCTD**
6. In-charge (Computer Cell), Directorate of Education with the request to upload the circular on the website of the department.
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**(HIMANSHU GUPTA)  
DIRECTOR (EDUCATION)**

# SPORTABILITY: Empowering Inclusion and Enriching Lives through Sports

The term 'Sportability' is an amalgamation of 'Sport' and 'Ability.' It is an initiative to promote inclusion by Modern School New Delhi, which has practiced for over a century, and continues to have at its heart, acceptance of diversity.

The concept is simple: many institutions have playgrounds and sports facilities which are underutilized after school hours and on holidays. The objective of this initiative was to create a model of how school resources can be utilized to benefit one of the most marginalized groups of our society – people with special needs, those with neurological and/or physical challenges.

The concept was developed by being goal-oriented and practical at every stage of planning, organizing, and implementation. Beyond the initial vision, a broad variety of tasks involved designing a functional model with granular arrangements of human resources and sports equipment that now enables several sports to be played by special needs persons in safe and secure environments. The success of the project can be attributed to the team effort and commitment of the school's board, principals, teachers, and socially conscious students.



It has been over a year since we started Sportability and there are now around 70 people benefitting from our commitment to offer our assets, organizational skills, and resources. Many participants of Sportability have won national and international laurels and made us proud. In addition, the core success of the project lies in enabling access to fun, exercise and, higher self-esteem for people with special needs. I see it as yet another manifestation of Modern School's century-old commitment to inclusion. It is a lesser-known fact that one of the main motives behind the establishment of Modern School in 1920 was to provide modern education to girls in an era when education for girls was limited and they were often restricted to the home.

## Why Sports?

The physical and mental health benefits of including a sports program in any person's life are well known. Our society has been torpedoing towards a sedentary lifestyle and poor eating habits for the last several decades and the impact of this change is well

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documented by the increase in in lifestyle diseases and mental health problems. Increased screen time has led to decreased functional use of our bodies and bad posture.

The overall benefits of a sports program for persons with special needs is no different. For example, we understand from some of our polio-affected participants that swimming has helped with muscle strengthening which enables them to play better table tennis. Or that yoga sessions have enabled greater flexibility to play better cricket. A general sense of wellbeing and greater self-esteem is a well understood outcome of playing sports.



### Sports and Education

It is a known fact that the education of a child involves much more than merely literacy and numeracy. For societies to progress, among other activities, it is necessary for communities to come together so that nobody is left behind. In our digital age, we should not lose sight of the softer but far more important values of compassion and empathy, which cannot be replaced by any AI software, as it is our humanism and creativity which create solutions for humanity. It is a complete fallacy that learning and giving is a one-way street – everybody gains from human interactions, the givers and the receivers. By opening its doors to a very differently abled population set, the school aims to awaken the conscience of the students to their privileges as well as responsibilities to their community.

Inclusion is also a major objective of the program. Playing team sports together, while taking advantage of different strengths and making allowances for of each player's weakness holds a larger lesson than just that of the playfield.

### Challenges

Public infrastructure for differently abled persons in India remains inadequate. Many interested and potential participants are discouraged by long commutes. In some cases, we arranged the transportation – but this is not a core objective. Ideally, every neighbourhood with a school and a playground should embrace the concept, so that many persons have a safe place to play. The cost of providing coaching and support staff is minimal and can be borne by an established institution. The returns are huge!

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### Why Sports?

All our participants are deeply appreciative of having an opportunity to simply play, as almost all had no or low access to sports infrastructure. Our biggest success story is that the lives of all our participants have been enriched; with fun, exercise and with opportunity they did not have. We feel joy in being able help our fellow citizens realize their full potential, acquire vital social skills, develop independence, and become empowered to act as agents of change.

For our competition-level participants, we are delighted and proud. Participants from Sportability have represented Delhi in parasports meets and in National-level games in badminton, cricket, table-tennis, and swimming. A few of our players have won laurels in international tournaments and are enthusiastic and optimistic of representing India in the future. The participants who have achieved personal or team laurels, are now ambassadors themselves for the many who until now have not had the chance to access sports resources.

### Future Path

Conceptually, educational institutes must recognize that empowering persons with

disabilities is an inter-disciplinary process, covering intervention, education, health, training, rehabilitation, and social integration. Sports can break prejudices and foster inclusion in communities.

I wish and hope many will replicate the Sportability model so its reach can expand to more schools. The concept must become a mirror for society to begin viewing disabled individuals as persons with skills that can be honed, and to stop viewing only the disability of the person.

To conclude, I would ask you to imagine a tall building which however has neither an elevator nor a staircase. How useful or functional would that be to anyone – how would anyone get to the top or to any floor? EVERYONE needs access and resources in order to climb up. Fundamentally, everyone needs resources to realize their potential. A society that does not facilitate each member to maximize their potential is like a building without stairs. Schools can, and must, help society by producing more compassionate citizens. I believe that activities that will help India build a more inclusive society must become an essential part of school life. 🏆

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ambika Pant serves as the Honorary Secretary of the Modern School Society, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi. She is a strong advocate of inclusive education and programs which foster community action to bring about social progress. Founder of the Sportability program, she was recently felicitated by Union Minister Smriti Irani for her work in Sportability.

