

The Quick Check Pocket Guide: Managing Behavior for Success on the Slopes

*Strategies for integrating a child with special needs into your mainstream lesson.**

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Currently 3% of the US population has some type of cognitive disability or challenge. A student living with any cognitive disability can, as fits assignment, present a daunting task for a snowsports instructor without the background or training to understand the disorder or how to deal with the behavioral issues that may arise. However, many ski and snowboard instructors find themselves in that position during a lesson. As a result of the increase in numbers of children with cognitive challenges, especially autism spectrum disorders, mainstream snowsports schools are teaching record numbers of students with special needs.

The encouraging fact is that more and more parents understand that physical activity is crucial for their child's good health and are placing their children with cognitive disabilities in classes to learn to ski or snowboard.

The *Quick Check Pocket Guide*, written by the Adaptive Sports Foundation, is a 44 page pocket guide packed full of information for everyone involved in the snowsports school lesson process, from the parents and child to the snowsports school desk, to the front line instructor. When a child with intellectual challenges is registered for a mainstream lesson, that child may need a little added help solving the many puzzles of learning a snowsport in an unfamiliar environment.

Managing Behavior for Success on the Slopes takes a look at the process of learning to ski or snowboard, from getting ready for the trip, to navigating the sometimes bewildering arrival and lesson process, and ultimately to the lesson time. This guide is replete with suggestions for parents and instructors to pave the way for a successful experience for the child with special needs. Fortunately, parents and/or instructors armed with a little knowledge, a lot of creativity, and the ability to solve problems can overcome many of the challenges that arise for a child as a result of frustration, inability to communicate, or sensory overload created by this new activity. And think about it, if children are set up for success from the beginning there may not be a need for the tips on dealing with difficult behavior! If the instructor thinks in terms of possibility, accomplishment, strength and ability, the child will have a great chance of being successful in the lesson.

Kathy Chandler, Adaptive Advisor for the PSIA-E Adaptive Board of Examiners says about the *Quick Check Pocket Guide*, "It is exciting to have the tools to create success for our students with cognitive issues. When parents and instructors work together the

success rate jumps by leaps and bounds and everyone is excited in the results. Thanks to ASF for creating this piece."

Katie Ertl, Team Manager of the PSIA/AASI National Education Teams adds, "I am thrilled the ASF has created a tool to help mainstream and adaptive instructors work with their students with special needs. Suggestions presented in the *Quick Check Pocket Guide* encourage parents and instructors to work together to have a safe, fun, and educational lesson."

Mickey Sullivan, PSIA-E Director of Education & Programs says, "The *Quick Check Pocket Guide* belongs in every ski and snowboard instructor's jacket."

ASF's goal is for the *Quick Check Pocket Guide* to help instructors feel empowered to be active participants in the student's learning experience. Every child deserves a shot at success. By approaching the child with special needs' lesson in a positive way, parents and instructors will all be helping a young person become more physically fit, self-assured, confident, and independent.

**This article was published in the Winter 2011 edition of Snow Pro, a publication of the Professional Ski Instructors of America Eastern/Education Foundation.*