

# SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAM ASSESSMENT BY JAY MANDARINO



This is an assessment that I modify for each student depending on their background or what their challenges may be.

I've learned lots over the years from training at university, as a staff member working for Toronto Parks & Recreation, counsellor at various special needs summer camps, several courses, many seminars, and mostly working with all types of children and youth all my life as I am 60 now. (I am a big kid at heart and still skateboard and Ski.) I have also learned lots as a Professional Certified Ski & Skateboarding Instructor, and now train other instructors here locally and around the globe. As well I have worked with the justice system, several psychologists and I currently sit on several boards including the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) for the past 20+ years.

What I have learned is that the world is getting more complex and difficult each year. We are all being faced with more and more challenges to deal with. We are all different and unique in the way we perceive things and deal with challenges and obstacles. As well we all learn in different ways and speeds.

A large number of children and youth might say things to others not with a bad or hurtful intention. Unfortunately it can be received in a very negative way causing harm to the other person affecting them tremendously.

The best insight I draw from is my own personal challenges being diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia and being put on a drug called Ritalin. I will never forget being in a room with two psychologists and my parents who were told high school would not be an option for me nor college or university and the most they could hope for was that I could be a gasoline attendant and only possibly with the right therapy, I might be able to be an assistant mechanic. Luckily, my parents didn't give up and didn't accept those statements made about what my future would or wouldn't be. Their love and faith in me were greater than those words. They continued their search for answers regarding the challenges I was facing in my studies and the search for the right doctor and learning environment for me.

I believe we all have the power to achieve what we want and where we put our focus on in life and that we all have a gift or specific talent. The work we have to do is to figure out the talent or gift we have, which is not always easy. I have a sixth sense and a special gift for helping children and youth as I walk the talk and thankfully have not failed yet.

Part of my assessment of the child or youth is to figure out their aptitudes and what things we can do to help foster and assist in a fun and exciting way so it's a win-win outcome for all. First, I start off with a set of 12 stretches which allows me to find out how well they listen and their hand-eye coordination and response time. Then I test to find out what is their dominant foot for stance and if it's even or split between right and left. Then we get them to do knee slides and test balance and agility. Some games are introduced that involve knee slides, balance and problem solving. At the same time I'm also testing dexterity and cognitive capabilities. Finally I get them on a skateboard or scooter and try some different tricks, etc. (Parents are encouraged to go to the second floor where they can observe the lesson from a distance.)

Throughout the assessment, I interact with the student and based on what they tell me and what I observe, I come up with suggestions or recommendations for the parent(s). When the lesson is finished I meet with one or both parents. It's up to their discretion if they want to share those recommendations with the child or not. Now my only rule is, if your child does not want me to share something with you, I have to respect that choice and not cross that line of trust. The only time I will share or cross that line is if I think they are going to do something that is either harmful to themselves or others.

My main goal is to help prevent children going through what I went through as a child and most important showing them they can be successful.

I mentor and teach during the lesson. The skatepark has been a saviour for many young children and youth as it was for me. My students confide in me and feel very comfortable sharing things with me they wouldn't necessarily share with their own parents. I have great confidence in what I do and have accomplished great success. I can get the kids to open up and share with their parents what they share with me and that they can tell their parents anything! I remind them that they are loved by their parents!!

I know from my own challenges it's really hard to talk about when you're young and you don't want to feel like an outcast or that you're not smart enough. There are many different causes that can affect you and we don't know exactly where that comes from. Kids and youth need a physical outlet to get rid of that built-up frustration or stress and skateboarding is a great outlet for that and I share that with everybody.



# Special Needs Assessment Form

Name:

Age:

Date:

CJ Instructor Staff:

Energy:

Attention:

Stance:

Stretches:

Hyperactive:

Problem Solving:

Balance:

Confidence:

Attitude:

Patience:

Following Instructions:

Observations & Recommendations:

## CJ's SKATEPARK

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