**Interview with teachers about experience in teaching or working with children with special needs, especially in support of their physical development or coordination skills**

*Podmurvice Elementary School, May 16, 2025 (from 11:00 to 11:30)*

On May 16, an interview was held with three teachers of our school: Loredana Jakominić, primary school teacher, Iva Vukić Antić, social pedagogue and Alida Devčić Crnić, librarian. They talked to their colleagues about their experience in teaching and working with students with special needs. Their experience in supporting these students in their physical development or coordination skills was especially discussed.

**Understanding Motor Skills in SEN Education**

1. In your experience, which physical or coordination skills do children with special needs most often struggle with in everyday school activities?

Speaking of personal experience in work, students with disabilities encounter various physical and coordination difficulties at school on a daily basis. This happens while working on school assignments and participating in school activities. Fine and coarse motor skills are very common. Difficulties with fine motor skills have an impact on their writing, the amount of what is written, the content of what is written and handwriting, and there are also cutting with scissors, erasing with an eraser, sharpening pencils, flipping through the pages of notebooks and books, and manipulating small and thin objects (writing utensils). Difficulties with gross motor skills directly affect their ability to move, dexterity, direction and speed of movement, and the same applies to jumping and especially to participation in sports activities. Eye-hand coordination, left and right arms or legs, as well as lateral movements can be very demanding for them. All of this makes tasks such as catching and throwing a ball, tracking an object or a moving person more difficult.

1. What methods or strategies do you currently use to support the development of these motor skills in your classroom or sessions?

Colleagues pointed out the different methods and strategies they use to support the development of motor skills in students. Almost always individually adjusted activities, oftenweight alternation (lighter –heavier –lighter) is used in the manipulation of objects and solving tasks to improve fine motor skills. Gamification is also used a lot - a game in work to encourage movement and coordination. The simplest and most common such activity is ball play and simple sports games. Gamification is very beneficial because students are not aware that they are learning because they learn through fun. The use of pictorial material, visual templates (picture book, book, film) helps students to better understand the task, solve it more easily and remember what they have learned. This practice should be daily because regular exercises and activities in everyday school work can significantly help students improve their motor skills. Equally important is the cooperation of all teachers who work with children.

1. Where do you feel traditional physical activities or exercises work well — and where do they fall short — in improving physical coordination?

To improve the coordination of students with disabilities, it is important to combine traditional physical activities with the individual capabilities and needs of students. Incorporating additional tools and methods such as VR glasses can certainly help achieve better results and help students with disabilities feel included, motivated and successful. Of course, you shouldn't overdo it with the use of VR glasses. Consistency and the right measure in use will certainly bring results.

**Exploring Technology & Innovative Practices**

1. Have you ever used technology (apps, devices, games) to support physical activity or coordination for your students?→ If so, can you share an example or describe what worked well?

To support students with psychomotor restlessness, we use the Play Attention device, while for physical coordination, we try to keep students as much as possible in the open space, in the park and on the playground, with a ball, to run and jump, climb and walk on uneven and sloping terrain. From experience, there are many of our students who have never (alone) climbed a tree or a larger rock. Students often have difficulty maintaining balance, which affects their performance in exercises and the motivation to continue practicing.

1. What challenges or limitations have you experienced when using technology with SEN students during physical activities?

Technology does not take into account the individual needs of students with disabilities. These are often standardized exercises that can be demanding or even inappropriate for students with disabilities, especially for students with sensory disabilities who can be upset, upset, frustrated for these reasons. Sometimes technology does not meet the specific needs of students.

**Focus on Virtual Reality (VR)**

1. What is your perception of using VR games or workouts to support children with special needs in improving their coordination skills?

Using VR glasses to support students with disabilities can certainly be helpful in improving their coordination skills. Care should be taken not to overuse them. Exaggeration is not good at anything. Virtual reality provides a stimulating environment for learning, overcoming learning difficulties, better focus on the task and exercise, working at your own pace, having fun, and affects greater motivation. It can simply be a very powerful and useful tool if its use is well planned.

1. In your opinion, what features would make a VR workout safe, accessible, and effective for SEN students?

First of all, the content and programs of VR glasses should be adapted to the needs of students. Visual, motor and auditory adaptation would be required. The content must correspond to the educational content for the student, and the space in which it is used should be safe to avoid injury in the event of a sudden change in body position. Students should be able to easily take off their VR glasses every time they don't feel comfortable. Teachers who work with VR glasses should have the knowledge and experience to work with students so that they can support them to the best possible extent.

When developing social skills, VR simulations can help children practice everyday situations (talking, shopping, crossing the road) without the pressure of the real world.

When increasing attention and concentration, a VR environment can minimize distractions and tailor content to the child's interests, thus encouraging focus.

Like toys, VR often helps children stay engaged for longer periods of time, especially those with ADHD or learning disabilities. Which increases motivation.

Interactive VR games can help with fine and gross motor skills and coordination (especially with activities that require precise movements).

And of course, VR experiences offer calming sounds, images and activities that help children with sensory integration disorder (often present in autism) whose sensory regulation is impaired.

Some VR environments encourage logic, social interaction, and attention, while others stimulate speech development and have the function of speech therapy.

1. Are there any particular risks or challenges you would be concerned about when using VR in this context?

The safety of students should come first. Then we think about the ease of use and availability of VR glasses for students with disabilities, about feedback and tracking their achievements as a motivational factor.

1. How do you think VR workouts could fit into your current teaching routines or physical activity programs?

Exercises to help in reading and understanding what is read in such a way that the image or film follows the text, learning historical content and geographical discoveries by traveling through time, visiting libraries throughout European cities... Participation in team sports, board games...

**Looking Ahead**

1. What kinds of VR activities or games do you think children with special needs would enjoy most — while also helping improve their coordination?

Best in games with movements. Physical movement is something they certainly miss since they tend to sit and look at screens. Games that are a combination of physical and mental activities where it is necessary to move the body such as solving puzzles, pantomime, imitating animals, sounds from nature. Games that simulate playing sports or those that help master artistic skills such as painting, playing instruments, designing and creating three-dimensional objects. They should definitely be such that students enjoy them and learn with the help of VR glasses and games.

1. Are there any particular skills, movements, or goals you would like a VR program to focus on for your students?

Reading and writing, walking, running, jumping, climbing, finger work (chopping, cutting, tearing, bending, tearing, gluing...)

1. What support or resources would you need (training, equipment, time) to successfully implement VR workouts in your school or sessions?

All of the above.

**Final Thoughts**

1. Is there anything else you would like to share — advice, ideas, or concerns — that could help us create better VR workouts for improving physical coordination in children with special needs?

The most important thing is that VR games are adapted to the individual needs and abilities of students with disabilities and to provide them with pleasure and ease of work and good learning results.