A CLOSER LOOK AT SPECIAL PROGRAM IN SPORTS

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High schools in different part of the country are now implementing a program for student-athletes. The program aims to improve the performance of the athletes in sports considering the maintenance of their academic grades. This program creates an avenue for the athletes to showcase their skills and improve their performance through a continuous program designed to develop a professional career pathway. Sport is an option for the students to choose their path based on their skills and desire. This program also aims to develop the skills of potential student-athletes and engage them in sports competition from school level to higher level of competitions. Athletes who excelled in their specialized sport were brought to universities and colleges using their sport to become a member of the varsity team and undergo scholarship program to enjoy the benefit of free education.

Special program in Sports is open to all Filipino high school-age students who passed the Physical Fitness-Sports Talent Identification Tests conducted before the enrollment period by the sports committee of the school. Students who have potential skills in more than one of the school sports offered and participated in any sports competition in elementary level are qualified to the program provided a certificate attested by the elementary school principal together with form 137 with general average grade of not lower than 80% and no failing grade in any subject, medical certificate administered by government physician, parental consent stating that the student may undergo rigid training in specialized sports and a certificate of good moral character certified by the elementary school principal.
Students admitted in the Special Program in Sports are provided a separate section/class from the regular class program. The class size will have a maximum of 45 students of at least two classes per year level now called grade level for the SPS. The schedule of class has two hours allotted for the specialization subject as part of the curriculum. The specialization subject handled by the teacher who will serve as trainer is equivalent to a load daily. Hence, a teacher-trainer/coach will be given an extra load less than the regular load of a teacher. A class advisory is considered a load.

To retain in the program, students shall maintain a final grade of at least 85% in the specialized subject or selected sport and at least 80% in other subjects. In cases where the requirement is not met, a student will be transferred in the regular class program with no deficiencies in the number of units earned provided the student has no failing grade. Student-athlete is not allowed to incur absences of more than 20% of the total number of school days. The specialized subject or sport is the alternative for the TLE subjects for the reason that both subjects could be used as students’ career pathway.

Students who wish to transfer to the SPS could be admitted provided that they come from any of the schools implementing the same program and must submit same requirements submitted by other student-athletes.

The evaluation of student performance follows the BEC rating system. The ratings for specialization is based on performance (50%), attitude (25%) and written outputs (25%). In terms of recognition, a gold medal is awarded to the most outstanding student per specialization at the end of the school year. A separate set of honor students are selected for the Special Program in Sports.

Athletics and/or swimming are the basic sports requirement in implementing the special program. Other events approved by the Deped is offered like archery, arnis, badminton,
chess, gymnastics, tennis, table tennis, taekwondo and dance sport categorized as individual/dual sports. For the team events, baseball, basketball, football, sepaktakraw, softball and volleyball is also offered. Sports events offered in the program must include a minimum of five individual/dual sports and three team sports. The sports specialization is offered on a 120-minute daily time frame and given three unit credits except for the grade 7 students with a 60-minute daily time frame of training.

The schools are consistently implementing the program taking the partnership with the local government. Facilities and sports equipments are provided by both concerned government institutions. Graduates from this program from are now enjoying their scholarship in different universities and colleges not only in their province but also in the well-known universities and colleges in Manila.

There are some changes in the program due to the new education curriculum called K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum like number of training hours, additional school year for the student-athletes, grading system or evaluation and other matters which be discussed by the school’s sports coordinator to coaches, teachers, trainers and other concerned personnel. Though changes are visible, adjustments could also be made to meet the needs of the program. This could be done through arrangements with parents, administrators, teachers and local government officials with regards to training period and utilization of facilities. Other part of the program concerning the academic progress of the athletes could be modified and improved depending on the needs of the athletes. For example, an athlete can take an additional ICT or TLE class though it is not part of their curriculum. A local arrangement among teachers could be done to give an extra access to the student-athlete concerning their academic progress. To make it simple, they can also enjoy taking up subjects which is not part of their curriculum as long as they can manage their time not giving up their time for training in their selected field of sport.
After they graduated from junior high school, they can continue their career path by enrolling sports track or strand in senior high school. They can continue their sports career until they graduated high school. Aside from being an athlete, they can also choose to enroll a program to become a coach or choose other career related to sports. This could be the best way to continue their sports journey.

The Special Program in Sports is proven a successful program based on the achievements of the schools and the athletes. This improves the personality of the student-athletes. They are now enjoying and using this skill in their new selected field or career after they graduated from high school. Most of them became leaders like the way they lead the team or the delegation during the sports competition when they were in high school. Experiences in the playing field made them more confident than any other college students. This is developed during the time they are playing under pressure in different places where the sports activities were held.

The personnel concerned in the program is still aiming to enhance the performance of the athletes by studying, researching, evaluating, assessing and finding ways to improve the program depending on the needs of the athletes and the institution. This may not make the student-athlete excel in their course when they are in college but it will surely make them a better person as they strive to live their lives with other people and as they deal with every situation where they need to make tough decisions in order to win the battle or to survive the challenges of life.