

**How to Restart an Inclusive Camping While Preventing COVID-19 Outbreak:
Interdisciplinary Study on the Utilization of ICT Support System to Create
Inclusive Outdoor Education to Enhance QOL for Persons with Disabilities**

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Abstract

Since March 2020, most camps for people with and without disabilities were canceled because of Sars-CoV-2 (COVID-19). How to restart recreational activities, such as camping, is an important issue for both health and mental well-being. This essay addresses the efforts of Campwith to restart their camping activities for people with and without disabilities during the pandemic in October 2021.

Keywords: inclusive camping, assistive technology, COVID-19, ICT, disabilities

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Since March 2020, most camps for people with and without disabilities were canceled because of Sars-CoV-2 (COVID-19). National Center for Child Health and Development in Japan (2021) shows that many children do not have enough opportunities to exercise and to meet their friends. In this paper, we introduce the efforts of one camp in Osaka, Japan, called “Campwith,” in restarting camping activities for people with and without disabilities during the pandemic in 2021.

Restarting recreational activities, such as camping, is important for both physical and mental health of people with and without disabilities. Coyne and Fullerton (2004) and Samuel, Lieberman & Murata (2012) describe the importance of physical education and physical activities, recreation, leisure, and sports to enhance children’s well-being and improved self-confidence and self-esteem. Takeuchi and Sakamoto (2018) indicate that benefits of inclusive camping include inviting students to feel safe towards new situations and developmental stages. In addition, this study shows that a camper-centered approach is important: (1) for campers, to create their space, (2) for families, to innovate their child-care style, and (3) for staff, to learn social-skills and social-work practice.

About Campwith

Campwith builds on other developments in inclusive education in Japan. Yoshitoshi and Takahashi (2021) describe a history of Japanese law pertaining to special education and

its change towards a more inclusive education with Japan's ratification of United Nations Conventions of the Rights of People with Disabilities. It is believed that the first organized camp for children with disabilities in Japan was held in Yoshima, Kagawa Prefecture in 1953, organized by the Asahi Shimbun (a newspaper), Social Welfare Organization, and Kobe YMCA. Since then, groups such as social welfare, parental and charitable organizations have developed camps for people with disabilities.

Campwith was founded in Osaka, Japan in 1998 as a volunteer organization. It became a non-profit organization in 2002. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Campwith held over 40 camps a year. The Mission Statement of Campwith is to "facilitate quality of life for all people with or without disabilities through outdoor and recreational activities, regardless of gender, age, or race." Many of the participants are people with cognitive and developmental disorders who live in western Japan. The Camp staff are mainly students connected with St. Andrew's University in Japan. In 2017, Campwith started "With Ashiya," a Type B Employment Support Center, and "Hirano cafeteria for all."

Reopening Camp During the Pandemic

From June 2021, Campwith implemented the "*Waku Waku* Kids Camp Project" to restart camping. This project worked in four phases to ensure that nature experience activities would be safe while still allowing students opportunities to cooperate with others. The four phases included: (1) Kids' Meeting, (2) Staff Training, (3) Inclusive Camping, and (4) Reviewing and Sharing (see Table 1). These phases were partially funded by Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

Table 1
Four Phases of the Project (Members)

Date	Phase	Details
August 28, 2021	Phase I	Kids' Zoom Meeting (Kids, Parents, Staff) 1) Goals of meeting 2) Ice breaking activity 3) Project description 4) Sharing of what kids want to do at the camp
September 5, 2021	Phase II	Pre-camp Training (Team A staff) Campfire day camp to learn how to connect to campers' needs while preventing Covid-19 spread.
October 5, 2021		Pre-camp Training (Team B staff) Zoom meeting about cooking day camp to learn how to connect to campers' need while preventing Covid-19 spread.
October 30, 2021	Phase III	Inclusive Fire Day Camp (Team A) to connect camper A's requested programs; Halloween Craft activity, dinner, and campfire with melted marshmallow.
October 31, 2021		Inclusive Cooking Day Camp (Team B) to connect with camper B's requested programs; Emergency Cooking, Melted Marshmallow, and doing a Halloween Craft.
November 2021	Phase IV	Reviewing and Sharing time (Kids, Parents, Staff) through Google Form for campers, families, and staff.
December 20, 2021		ICT & AT Training (Staff) Zoom meeting to learned how to share campers' needs and expression. 1) Virtual self-introduction 2) CDS Projects 3) ICT/AT Resource such as IdeaBoardz, Kahoot!, Nearpod, Telepresence Robot, and Immersive.
January 9, 2022		Zoom meeting (Kids, Parents, Staff) to share their review, comments, and future visions through ice-breaking, camper's presentations, and project reports.

Source: Waku Waku Kids Camp Project Report (2021)

After sharing what the children wanted to do at the kids' meeting (August 28, 2021), we examined an order-made camping program (while taking preventative measures against Covid-19) through staff training and meeting (September 5 and October 5, 2021). The final program was restructured with the advice of adapted camp specialists, a doctor and a nurse.

To conduct campers' requested programs, Inclusive fire day camp was included along with Halloween Craft activity, dinner, and campfire with melted marshmallows for Camper A (October 30, 2021). Inclusive cooking day camp was included along with Emergency Cooking, melted marshmallow, and doing a Halloween Craft for Camper B (October 31, 2021) camping.

Afterwards, efforts were made to get feedback on participants' experiences. During November, we had a reviewing time through Google Form for campers, families, and staff. The survey included questions such as: (1) evaluations about programs and preventions for camping; (2) comments for changes; and (3) hopes after camping. All participants responses showed positive evaluation and comments. Camper A's parent wrote "she tended not to go to school, but she changed her mind through camping." Also, Camper B's parent wrote "[We] refreshed with family! He doesn't cook at home, but he enjoyed cooking at the camp." Camp staff also provided positive feedback from their experience in implementing the camp.

To then learn how to share campers' needs and expressions by using ICT, Staff learned about virtual self-introductions, CDS Projects, and ICT Resource (On December 20, 2021). On January 9, 2022, 2 families and 4 staff members had an hour Zoom meeting to share their review, comments, and future visions through an ice-breaking activity, camper's presentations, and project reports. The camper chose to share his most meaningful pictures. These reviews, comments, and observation reports revealed campers' positive attitudes, behaviors, and sense of achievement. This included: (1) feeling refreshed; (2) improved

camping skills; and (3) improved social skills.

In conclusion, although this reopening of camping in phases was a success, we also discussed several challenges moving forward. To create a safe and enjoyable camping experience with participants, families, and staff, we have to prepare for: (1) COVID-19 Safety Check; (2) ICT/AT Training Series; (3) Decision-Making Setting; (4) Flexible Programming; (5) the need for additional funds and staff training aligned with the current pandemic situation; (6) Balancing intimacy and social distancing for safety; and (7) Studying Other Inclusive Camp Models.

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