

Everett Public Schools' students adapt toys for kids with special needs

Donated toys are modified to become accessible to all students regardless of abilities



EVERETT--March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and March 7-9 Cascade High School Career and Technical Education (CTE) students worked alongside district staff adapting toys helping make play inclusive and possible to all students regardless of abilities.

"This work was started in our area by the UW engineering school in a program called [Husky Adapt](#) at an Everett High School workshop," shared Daniella Poirier, director of digital resources.

ADAPT stands for "accessible design and play technology" allowing children to have inclusive play with others, allowing critical aspects of social, emotional and physical development.

"That workshop sparked an idea of doing the same for our students, but we wanted it to be a sustainable project we could continue on an annual basis" continued Poirier. "Our Assistive Technology team, Learning, Information, Technology Services (LITS), CTE and Special Services team worked together with Cascade High School's Foundation of Manufacturing students to create a plan to adapt toys for students that receive special services due to disabilities. We came up with a plan, but we needed toys!"

With the support of an Everett Public Schools Foundation grant, they also hosted an *Adaptive Technology Toy Drive* in December to collect toys and supplies to modify, making them accessible for an individual with physical, cognitive, communication and vision disabilities.



"Toys can be activated by simply pressing a button or switch with any part of their body such as their elbow or head," added Danielle DeLuca, CTE facilitator. "This may be their first step towards controlling their environment, possibly leading up to operating a wheelchair or communication device."

"We are so appreciative of the donations as they help our students grow to their full potential, especially to communicate their needs and wants if they don't communicate using their voice," said Kelley Clevenger, executive director of special services. "Play is a crucial part of child development and allows opportunities for human and peer connection, learning, active engagement and participation, critical development, curiosity and most of all having fun!"

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