

MAGYAR ZSONGLÓR EGYESÜLET HUNGARIAN JUGGLING ASSOCIATION

CIRCUS PEDAGOGY APPLIED FOR SPECIAL NEED UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND FOR EXPERTS OF HEALTH-SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL SECTOR



LOCATION: Hungary

TARGET GROUP: experts working with special need population, university students with special needs

Two interesting, good practices of the Hungarian Juggling Association are presented here, however their work using circus for therapeutical purposes, social inclusion or community building is far wider, including running regular groups, develop new educational tools and methods, distribution and promotion of existing results through the country and in Europe.

Training experts of health-social-educational sector



Photo: Veronika Gallyas

In 2015 after having 3 intensive years of running social circus groups throughout the country with more than 100 kids every week in 5-6 different location, they realized that it could have a multiplier effect in spreading of the method if they provide the training to those teachers, therapist, nurses, doctors who are taking care of the special need groups daily. Their knowledge in their fields could be boosted by the creativity, freedom, colourfulness and magic which can be contributed by circus methods. The aim was to provide these people a huge variety of games and exercises deriving from juggling or circus and adapted to low functioning population with the main objective to increase their time on task and number in repetition in whatever skill we would like to develop.



Photo: Veronika Gallyas

Hungarian Juggling Association provides two type of trainings and of course their specially tailored variations:

- 1) social circus 20 hours training with to give on knowledge to enhance social inclusion, using mainly the well know juggling equipment and basic thumbling, balancing and partner acrobatic for high functioning population in socially disadvantage circumstance.
- 2) circus pedagogy for therapeutic purposes 20 hours training, which contains methods of Craig Quat with juggle board and with everyday objects, based on the theory of Process formation.

Integration to university curriculum

In 2024, the Hungarian Juggling Association is collaborating with two Hungarian universities on the effective use of circus pedagogy.

The collaboration with Óbuda University began in 2017, and with Pannon University in 2022. The focus of the joint work at both institutions is to integrate the neurological developmental and learning-supporting effects of juggling into university education. The collaboration has been successful at both institutions, with the method being adapted to meet the specific needs of each university through two significantly different practical implementations.

Óbuda University – Budapest

The development of the Juggling for Effective Learning course started in 2017 and was launched as an elective course in the 2018-19 academic year in Budapest. Over the 14 sessions of the course, the practical component is fulfilled by learning the basics of various juggling props, with a special emphasis on juggling balls, for which the participants are tasked with making three balls themselves. The course ends with an exam presentation, where students creatively present the techniques, they have learned during the semester.

In the theoretical part of the course, students learn about the beneficial effects of juggling on the nervous system via the e-learning system, and they also complete a test on the material. Additionally, the students are provided with examples of learning strategies, and through learning difficult juggling techniques, they receive insights into self-development methods and the application of positive coping strategies.



Photo: Veronika Gallyas



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The course has been offered every semester from 2018 to 2024, including during the pandemic, and has been attended by an average of 13 students, all of whom have documented learning disabilities, such as dyslexia or dysgraphia.

Pannon University – Veszprém

We began working with Pannon University in 2020 in connection with the European Capital of Culture program, which led to the establishment of a close collaboration with the university. Our specialized workshops were launched in the fall semester of the 2022-23 academic year and have been ongoing since then. Together with staff from the university's organization for students with special needs, we support students with learning disabilities in completing their sports courses by offering a session specifically designed for them.

During the 10-session, 2-hour workshops, students have the opportunity to complete the required 20 hours of sports activities solely through this juggling-focused course, although they can combine it with other activities or spread the hours over a longer period if needed.

Results of TRAINING EXPERTS OF HEALTH-SOCIAL-EDUCATIONAL SECTOR

1-day introductory taster to understand the concept of circus pedagogy was held for more than 1000 experts from the field of health- education and social work in the last 10 years.

250 participants completed the 20 hours training of social circus

120 participants completed the 20 hours training with therapeutic purposes

7 conferences were held on circus pedagogy in Inspiral Circus Center, Budapest, the space of the Hungarian Juggling Association

1 book was published with 12 chapters written by the team of Association composed by social circus trainers and specialist and therapists using circus pedagogy

1 article was published in the Review of Hungarian Occupational Therapists

Strategical partnership with Bárczy Gusztáv special need elementary school to further develop methods and combining the knowledge in pedagogy with special need students from Bárczy with the knowledge of the circus trainers of the Association by using it directly with the target group on the field.

Strategical partnership with University of Special Need with the aim of informing the future therapist and teachers on the methods of circus pedagogy and create the foundation to integrate this knowledge on long term to their curriculum.

More than 30 international projects to develop, promote and exchange practice on the field of circus pedagogy used with special need groups.



Photo: Veronika Gallyas

More than 30 webinars created as a learning material in English and in Hungarian to spread the methods on a digital format.

Series of short films are presenting relevant topics of circus pedagogy

Results of integration to university curriculum

The cooperation with the two universities ensures prestige for the Hungarian Juggling Association and recognition of circus pedagogy. The joint work with higher education institutions shows that this organisation carries out legitimate pedagogical work, which is also valued at an academic level, and this provides a reference point for collaboration with other partners as well.

Results at Óbuda University – Budapest



Photo: Veronika Gallyas

The main result of our collaboration with Óbuda University is the publication of three professional articles, which present the outcomes of our work. Two of these articles were published in Hungarian in 2021 and 2023, while the English-language article published in 2024 is a summary and update of the 2023 Hungarian article. For the 2023

article, we created a questionnaire for previous course participants, where an important question was how useful they found the course content in their university studies. The results showed that 73% of respondents found the knowledge gained from the course applicable. Furthermore, 100% of the respondents would recommend the course to other students.

These published articles in accredited journals are now also being shared among higher education institutions. For example, they have been used as part of a project pedagogy course assignment for students in the Special Education program at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University in Eger, as a live example of alternative pedagogical methodology.

In response to the interest of international students, in 2024 we began developing a separate English-language course titled Juggling for Effective Learning. We updated and translated the course description to reflect the experiences gained, and we also filmed instructional videos in English for the e-learning system. The English-language course is scheduled to launch in the spring of 2025, alongside the Hungarian course, assuming all administrative tasks are completed by then. The course has been completed by approximately 80 students during its nine sessions. These students presented individual exam presentations, which included group works, as well as duo and trio performances.

Since 2022, the exam location has been the Inspirál Circus Center, operated by the Association, providing a unique circus experience for university students.

Results at Pannon University – Veszprém

The first major achievement was the successful integration of the program into the university's curriculum. Over time, more and more students became interested, and the reputation of the developmental juggling program spread among university students. By 2024, the workshops were attended by an average of 9-10 students per session. The program is also featured at the university's opening events to showcase this best practice.

Find out more on [their website](#).

Their [Youtube](#) page is a library of informative sources on inclusive circus.

Check out:

- [Digital conference of functional circus 2022](#), 8 videos
- [Inclusive Juggling Symposium](#) – 6 videos
- [Webinar by Craig Quat on the theory of functional juggling](#)
- [Educational videos on therapeutic circus methods](#)

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