



Department of
Education

Adapted Physical Education

An Introductory Tennessee Resource
Guide

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Introduction

The Tennessee Department of Education (department) administers a Quality Physical Education survey to a contact in every school building annually each fall. This survey was designed in collaboration with the American Heart Association, and the data gathered is used to get an understanding of what physical education looks like throughout the state. Educators were provided 13 comprehensive options when asked which topics would be most useful as a physical education professional development opportunity. Of the 1124 schools who completed the 2020-21 school year survey, 457 identified adapted physical education as one of their highest priorities. Further data analysis showed that regardless of the grades being served, adapted physical education was one of the top four prioritized professional development topics.

Because equitable access to physical education for students with disabilities is a federally mandated component of special education services, *see* 34 C.F.R. § 300.108, the adapted physical education teacher may be a direct service provider. The department has developed this guide as a means to provide expanded resources for adapted physical education and inclusion in physical education.

Definitions

Accommodations provide equitable access during instruction and assessments and do not change the construct being assessed nor compromise the integrity or validity of the assessment or content. An accommodation is defined as a change in the routine conditions under which students access and participate in instruction and assessment. Accommodations change how the student is taught or expected to learn. Accommodations are intended to reduce or mitigate the effects of a student's disability; however, accommodations do not reduce learning expectations. Although accommodations do not change the construct intended to be measured by the assessment or the meaning of the resulting scores, they do provide equity and serve to level the playing field for students with disabilities.

Adapted physical education (APE) is about meeting the unique needs of individual students with disabilities who are unable to benefit from general physical education classes or require the additional services of APE. APE instructors provide planning and assessment, consultation for general physical education teachers, with specially designed instruction, and adapts or modifies the curriculum, task, equipment, and/or environment so a student can participate in all aspects of physical education. APE and general physical education teachers work together to design meaningful and beneficial instruction for all students.

Developmental Adapted Physical Education (DAPE) is specially designed physical education instruction and services for pupils with disabilities who have a substantial delay in physical development.

Inclusion means that all students, regardless of ability or disability, have the right to be respected and appreciated as valuable members of the school community, fully participate in all school activities, and interact with peers of all ability levels with opportunities to develop friendships. Inclusive physical education is not the same as adapted physical education. Inclusive physical education includes students with disabilities in regular physical education classes. Specifically, teaching strategies, equipment, environments, and assessments have been adapted to meet the needs of all students.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) a document that identifies a student's disability, outlines clear goals and objectives, and explains how the student will be supported. The IEP guides how a school configures its special education resources in order to provide opportunities for a student with disabilities to achieve desired outcomes.

Modifications are a change to the content of the standard, which will mean identifying standards that are fundamentally related but also developmentally appropriate. Modifications change what the student is taught or expected to learn. The assumption would be that students are able to participate within the core curriculum without modifications unless student performance data indicates otherwise.

Occupational therapy addresses the physical, cognitive, psychosocial, sensory-perceptual, proprioceptive, and other aspects of performance in a variety of contexts and environments to support engagement in occupations that affect physical and mental health, well-being, and quality of life.

Physical education is defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act as the development of 1) physical and motor skills, 2) fundamental motor skills and patterns, 3) skills in aquatics, dance, and individual and group games and sports (including intramural and lifetime sports), and 4) includes special physical education, adapted physical education, movement education, and motor development. See 34 C.F.R. § 300.39(b)(2).

Physical therapy addresses mechanical, physiological and developmental impairments, functional limitations, and disability or other health and movement related conditions in order to alleviate impairments and functional limitations by designing, implementing, and modifying therapeutic interventions.

Adapted Physical Education Nationally

The implementing regulations for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) set forth the requirements for physical education in [34 C.F.R. § 300.108](#):

The State must ensure that public agencies in the State comply with the following:

- (a) General. Physical education services, specially designed if necessary, must be made available to every child with a disability receiving a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), unless the public agency enrolls children without disabilities and does not provide physical education to children without disabilities in the same grades.
- (b) Regular physical education. Each child with a disability must be afforded the opportunity to participate in the regular physical education program available to nondisabled children unless—
 - (1) The child is enrolled full time in a separate facility; or
 - (2) The child needs specially designed physical education, as prescribed in the child’s IEP.
- (c) Special physical education. If specially designed physical education is prescribed in a child’s IEP, the public agency responsible for the education of that child must provide the services directly or make arrangements for those services to be provided through other public or private programs.
- (d) Education in separate facilities. The public agency responsible for the education of a child with a disability who is enrolled in a separate facility must ensure that the child receives appropriate physical education services in compliance with this section.

Standards and Certification

Adapted Physical Education National Standards (APENS) was developed and is provided by the National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities (NCPEID). The purpose of [APENS](#) is to ensure that physical education for students with disabilities is delivered by a qualified Adapted Physical Educator. In order to meet this purpose, a set of 15 national standards representing the content a qualified Adapted Physical Educator must know to do their job was developed. In addition, a national certification exam was developed to measure the specialized content. Individuals who wish to become Nationally Certified Adapted Physical Educators (CAPE) must meet the [minimum criteria](#) to be eligible to sit for the exam.

Table 1: APENS 15 Standards of Specialized Knowledge

<p>Standard 1: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT</p>

<p>The foundation of proposed goals and activities for individuals with disabilities is grounded in a basic understanding of human development and its applications to those with various needs. For the adapted physical education teacher, this implies familiarity with theories and</p>

practices related to human development. The emphasis within this standard focuses on knowledge and skills helpful in providing quality APE programs.

Standard 2: MOTOR BEHAVIOR

Teaching individuals with disabilities requires some knowledge of how individuals develop. In the case of APE teachers, it means having knowledge of typical physical and motor development as well as understanding the influence of developmental delays on these processes. It also means understanding how individuals learn motor skills and apply principles of motor learning during the planning and teaching of physical education to students with disabilities.

Standard 3: EXERCISE SCIENCE

Adapted physical educators must understand that modifications to the scientific principles of exercise and the application of these principles may be needed when teaching individuals with disabilities to ensure that all children with disabilities enjoy similar benefits of exercise. While there is a wealth of information in the foundational sciences, the focus of this standard will be on the principles that address the physiological and biomechanical applications encountered when working with diverse populations.

Standard 4: MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

This standard is one of the foundation standards underscoring the background an adapted physical educator should have in order to comply with the mandates of legislation and meet the needs of students. Understanding the measurement of motor performance, to a large extent, is based on a good grasp of motor development and the acquisition of motor skills covered in other standards.

Standard 5: HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

This standard traces facts regarding legal and philosophical factors involved in current day practices in adapted physical education. This information is important to understand the changing contribution that physical education can make in their lives. Major components of each law that related to education and physical activity are emphasized. The review of history and philosophy related to special and general education is also covered in this area.

Standard 6: UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES OF LEARNERS

Standard 6 refers to information based on the disability areas identified in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) found within school age population. Material is categorically organized in order to present the information in a systematic matter. This organization is not intended to advocate a categorical approach to teaching children with disabilities. All children should be treated as individuals and assessed to determine what needs they have.

Standard 7: CURRICULUM THEORY AND DEVELOPMENT

Educators planning to teach physical education to students with disabilities should recognize that certain Curriculum Theory and Development concepts, such as selecting goals based on relevant and appropriate assessments, must be understood by APE

teachers. Curriculum Theory and Development is more than writing unit and lesson plans. Nowhere does this come into play more than when one is planning a program for a student with disability.

Standard 8: ASSESSMENT

This standard addresses the process of assessment, one that is commonly taught as part of the basic measurement and evaluation course in a physical education degree curriculum. Assessment goes beyond data gathering to include measurements for the purpose of making decisions about special services and program components for individuals with disabilities.

Standard 9: INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND PLANNING

Instructional design and planning must be developed before an APE teacher can provide services to meet legal mandates, educational goals and most importantly the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. Many of the principles addressed earlier in human development, motor behavior, exercise science and curriculum theory and development are applied to this standard in order to successfully design and plan programs of physical education.

Standard 10: TEACHING

A major part of any APE position is teaching. In this standard many of the principles addressed earlier in such standard areas as human development, motor behavior, and exercise science, are applied to this standard in order to effectively provide quality physical education to individuals with disabilities.

Standard 11: CONSULTATION AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

As more students with disabilities are included in the general education program, teachers will provide more consultation and staff development activities for colleagues. This will require sensitivity and excellent communication skills. The dynamics of interdisciplinary cooperation in the consultation process requires knowledge of several consultative models. This standard identifies key competencies an adapted physical educator should know related to consultation and staff development.

Standard 12: STUDENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

Program evaluation is a process of which student assessment is only a part. It involves evaluation of the entire range of educational services. Few physical educators are formally trained for program evaluation, as national standards for programs have only recently become available. Therefore, any program evaluation that has been conducted is typically specific to the school or district or limited to a small range of parameters such as number of students scoring at a certain level of a physical fitness test. Adapted physical education programs or outcomes for students with disabilities are almost never considered in this process.

Standard 13: CONTINUING EDUCATION

The goal of this standard is to focus on APE teachers remaining current in their field. A

variety of opportunities for professional development are available. Course work at a local college or university is just one avenue. APE teachers can take advantage of workshops, seminars and presentations at conferences, conventions or in service training. Distance learning opportunities are also becoming abundant.

Standard 14: ETHICS

A fundamental premise of the Adapted Physical Education National Standards Project is that those who seek and meet the standards to be certified as adapted physical educators will always strive to adhere to the highest of ethical standards in providing programs and services for children and youth with disabilities. This standard has been developed to ensure that its members not only understand the importance of sound ethical practices, but also adhere to and advance such practices.

Standard 15: COMMUNICATION

In recent years, the role of the professional in APE has evolved from being a direct service provider to include communicating with families and other professionals in order to enhance program instruction for individuals with disabilities. This standard includes information regarding the APE teacher effectively communicating with families and other professionals using a team approach in order to enhance service delivery to individuals with disabilities.

Organizations

- [The National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities \(NCPEID\)](#)
- [National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability \(NCHPAD\)](#)
- [Society of Health and Physical Educators \(SHAPE America\)](#)

Adapted Physical Education in Tennessee

In the Physical Education Classroom

Tennessee does not currently offer a certification or endorsement in Adapted Physical Education. Sources show that few states do, somewhere between 14 and 17. There are also no higher education institutes in Tennessee that offer an Adapted Physical Education or Development Adapted Physical Education (DAPE) certificate or degree. These non-exhaustive lists are meant to connect districts, schools, and teachers with a variety of options when considering how to best support the needs of their students in either inclusive or adapted physical education instruction.

Evidence Based Practices for Adapted PE

- [Believe in You](#) - Believe in You® is an episodic series designed to educate students and staff about the incredible power of believing in yourself, despite the challenges and trials that life may present. Each of the 9 episodes per season lasts for eight to eleven minutes and is accompanied by lesson plans and activity guides to take the conversation further and spark critical thinking.
- [Exercise Buddy®](#) - A visual exercise system designed to provide apps that teach and inspire individuals with autism to exercise.
- [Fit 5](#) - From Special Olympics, Fit 5 is based on the three simple goals of exercising five days per week, eating five total fruits and vegetables per day, and drinking five water bottles of water per day. Fitness videos feature five levels, and the complete fitness guide and accompanying fitness cards are available in five languages.
- [I Can Do It! Program](#) - The program helps schools offer an integrated program of physical education, physical activity, and training in good nutritional behaviors to students with disabilities in grades K-12. Although some students may participate in the program on an individual basis, ICDI prioritizes an inclusive, integrated approach in which students with and without disabilities play and participate in physical education together.
- [NCHPAD's Inclusive Physical Education Fitness Stations](#) - NCHPAD's Inclusive Fitness Stations Posters depicts an exercise and its adaptation. These posters can be downloaded, printed, and posted in each station to provide the students with a clear visual representation of exercises.
- [NCPEID Teaching Resources for Practitioners](#) - The National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities offers various resources for practitioners to help provide quality adapted physical education/activity programming for individuals with disabilities.
- [Online Physical Education Network \(OPEN\)](#) - Free physical education and physical activity curriculum resources for K-12 as well as early childhood. Challenge progressions and modifications are built into every lesson plan as a strategic part of universal design.

Adapted and Inclusive Physical Education and Sport Equipment Sources and Grant Opportunities

- [Autism-Products](#)
- [Gopher Sport](#)
- [Flaghouse](#)
- [Move United](#)
- [NCHPAD – Low budget ideas](#)
- [S&S Worldwide](#)
- [School Specialty](#)
- [Toledo Physical Education Supply](#)
- [Tennessee Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance \(TAHPERD\) Grant](#) - TAHPERD provides 8 grants of up to \$500.00 each to current members of the association. TAHPERD will support projects that improve the quality of, and access to, educational and training resources; improve the effectiveness of direct services to students; and foster communication, resource sharing and promotion of health/physical education/fitness/wellness/ activities within communities.

Graduation Requirements

Tennessee students working toward a regular high school diploma or alternate academic diploma (AAD) are required to complete .5 credits of physical education and 1 credit of Lifetime Wellness.¹ See State Board of Education Rule 0520-01-03-.06. Lifetime Wellness is a holistic approach to health and lifetime physical activities in Tennessee high schools. This approach to total wellness encompasses the physical, mental, social, and personal needs of the individual. Lifetime wellness is considered health education, not physical education, and has its own set of [academic standards](#).

Transition Planning

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) defines “transition services” as a “coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities.” 34 C.F.R. § 300.43(a)(1). Tennessee physical education standards can positively support transition goals. The five standards components are as follows:

¹ Students who are working towards an occupational diploma or special education diploma are not required to complete physical education; however, they should be provided the opportunity to participate.

1. Motor Skills
2. Movement Knowledge and Concepts (K-5) or Cognitive Concepts (6-12)
3. Fitness and Physical Activity
4. Personal and Social Responsibility
5. Values Physical Activity

The transition plan is the road map that facilitates the movement from high school to postsecondary. Through a high-quality transition plan, IEP teams develop actionable steps to make the student's postsecondary goals attainable.

Successful transition begins in kindergarten. Each year of the student's education should be preparing them for their postsecondary success. Including physical education as a part of the transition plan conversation from the beginning can have a huge impact on a student's ability to achieve postsecondary success, regardless of their chosen path. Students start with foundational skills in [grades K-5](#), learn more specific concepts of game and sport while exploring lifelong physical activity in [grades 6-8](#), and finally demonstrate application for a physically active lifestyle in [grades 9-12](#).

The IEP team should create connections for the student and their family with outside agencies that can provide service for the student after they leave school. SHAPE America has published a guidance document on [Providing Community-Based PE Services For Students With Disabilities in Special Education Transition Programs](#).

Related services

IEP teams may determine that related services are necessary for students to benefit from special education. These services typically include developmental, corrective, and other supportive services. Related services should support the special education program outlined in the IEP with a clear correlation between the related services and the IEP goals. Physical education is a direct service, not a related service, because physical education for students with disabilities is a federally mandated component of special education services. See 34 C.F.R. § 300.39(a)(1)(ii). Related services examples relevant to physical education participation and outcomes include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Hearing/auditory services
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Recreation services
- School health services
- Aides in general education setting
- Sign-language interpreter
- Vision services
- Orientation and mobility services

Professional Development Opportunities for Educators

SHAPE America has developed the [Roadmap to Adapted Physical Education](#), a free interactive course to guide educators through the core components of adapted physical education services and how to apply those components to an individual program. The self-paced course allows participants to reflect on their own physical education program through critical thinking tasks and engagement activities. As the final project, participants will have the opportunity to answer questions that will allow them to personalize their own roadmap for adapted physical education services specific to their state and district. This online course is appropriate for educators K-12 and provides a certificate for three contact hours upon successful completion.

[CATCH Inclusive Health Video Series](#) is a free, 4-part video training for out-of-school time instructors that covers best-practices for including youth with intellectual disability (ID) in physical activity sessions.

NCPEID hosts an [annual conference](#) each summer. A comprehensive listing of [APE/APA professional preparation programs by state](#) is also available.

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools

[The Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools](#) program is aimed at promoting social inclusion through intentionally planned and implemented activities affecting systems-wide change. With sports as the foundation, the three-component model offers a unique combination of effective activities that equip young people with tools and training to create sports, classroom, and school climates of acceptance. These are school climates where students with disabilities feel welcome and are routinely included in, and feel a part of, all activities, opportunities, and functions.

- [Unified Sports in Schools](#) - Unified Sports joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. It was inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding.
 - [Preschool/Elementary School Resource](#)
 - [Middle/High School Resources](#)
- [Unified Physical Education](#) - Unified Physical Education is a concept for bringing students with and without disabilities together, as equals, in a physical education setting where all students earn physical education credit, thus putting all students on equal footing. Unified Physical Education is not meant to take the place of existing physical education requirements or adapted physical education, but rather be an additional inclusionary opportunity for students who choose to join the class.
- [Special Olympics Fitness Guide for Schools](#) - The Special Olympics Fitness Guide for Schools was developed to support school-based implementation of Special Olympics Fitness programming encouraging students with and without intellectual disabilities to achieve optimal health and

performance through adequate physical activity, nutrition, and hydration. A component of the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program and inclusive sports, Special Olympics Fitness can be a catapult for accelerating inclusion efforts and promoting lifelong, healthy habits in schools.

See the [Special Olympics Tennessee](#) website for more information and current contact information.

Tips to Support Parents and the IEP Team

- Physical education must be made available equally to students with disabilities and students without disabilities. *See* 34 C.F.R. § 300.108(a).
- If physical education is specifically designed to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability and is set out in that student’s IEP, those services must be provided whether or not they are provided to other students in the agency. *See* OSEP Letter to Kelly (2013); OSEP Letter to Tymeson (2013).
- Physical education needs to be provided to the student with a disability as part of the special education services that child and family receive. *See* 34 C.F.R. § 300.39(a)(1)(ii) (“Special education means specially designed instruction . . . including instruction in physical education.”) This is contrasted with physical therapy and occupational therapy, which are related services.
- Consider using the [Adapted Physical Education National Standards 3rd Edition](#) to inquire about the qualifications of the physical educator for the student requiring adapted physical education instruction.
- Use NCHPAD’s [IEP Roadmap for Physical Education](#)
- Consider including the physical education teacher in the development of the students’ IEP as an “other individual who has knowledge or special expertise about the child.” *See* 34 C.F.R. § 300.321(a)
- Students with disabilities should receive their instruction, services, and supports in their least restrictive environment (LRE) as determined by the IEP team. *See* 71 Fed. Reg. 46,577 (2006). Adaptations, accommodations, and/or modifications may be necessary for the student to meaningfully participate and to ensure that each student will experience success in a safe environment. Some of the LRE options that may be considered include one or more of the following options:
 - The general adapted PE setting for assessment
 - The general adapted PE setting with a teaching assistant or peers
 - A separate class setting with peers
 - A separate class setting with assistants for assessment
 - A one-to-one setting between students and the instructor

Opportunities for Further Exploration

When asked where Tennessee has an opportunity to improve in terms of support or resources for adapted physical education, professionals in the field voiced the following:

- “Schools/districts could include better advertising of Special Olympics and unified sports options.”
- “Content-specific professional development opportunities for physical educators from the district would be a huge help. Most of us only have experience in one or two adapted courses from college.”
- “I’d like to know what other services my students are receiving so we can collaborate, or at least communicate.”
- “We need funds to buy adaptive equipment for modifications.”
- “Inclusive before and after school options are important too. TSSAA only has Unified Track and Field. It’s time to add more sports to the state Unified competition.”
- “What is the role of and how can physical education be a more deliberate part of a successful transition plan?”

These thoughts can be used to continue conversations and investigate resources beyond the capability of this introductory resource guide.

Additional Resources

- [Active Schools Inclusive PE and Physical Activity Survey Report](#)
- [SHAPE America Guidance Document: Answering Frequently Asked Questions About Adapted Physical Education](#)
[Video: Universal Design for Learning in Physical Education](#)
- [Pocket Tool for Adapted Physical Education Teachers](#)
- [Disability Awareness in Physical Education](#)
- [SHAPE America Teacher Toolbox: Adapted Physical Education](#)
- [Autism and Considerations in Recreation and Physical Activity Settings](#)
- [Helping Students with a Disability Meet the National Standards and Grade-Level Outcomes](#)
- [A Chance to Play is a Chance to Learn: Integrating Individuals with Physical Disabilities into Physical Education](#)
- [Physical Education for Children with Spinal Cord Injury](#)
- [Academy of Pediatric Physical Therapy Fact Sheet: The Role and Scope of Pediatric Physical Therapy in Fitness, Wellness, Health Promotion, and Prevention](#)
- [NCHPAD Video Series - Improving the Lives of Individuals with Autism Through Exercise](#)
- [Adapted PE Back-to-School Checklist](#)

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