

Adapted Physical Education

Geir Rosvik, Adapted Physical Education Specialist, Seattle, WA, Public Schools and dad to Iselen

Students with special needs are required to receive at least the same amount of Physical Education (PE) as students who are typically developing. Federal law defines PE as the development of physical and motor fitness, fundamental motor skills and patterns, and skills in aquatics, dance and individual and group sports (including intramural and lifetime sports).

Some students with disabilities are able to participate in regular PE activities. Adapted Physical Education (APE) is PE that is customized and modified to address the needs of the individual.

In January 2013, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights determined that schools need to offer equal access to extracurricular activities for students with disabilities. Extracurricular activities include club, varsity, and intramural sports programs.

The following are core principles that should be applied when providing APE to students with disabilities.

Safety

When developing a plan, teachers and other staff need to determine students' abilities and consideration should be given to things such as range of motion, weight bearing, and sensory issues. An example for a student with limb differences might be lowering an activity to the floor, using assistive devices for the affected limbs or designing an activity that uses the unaffected limbs. Teachers should adapt activities to meet the needs of the student, rather than expect the student to adapt to the activity.

Placement

Adapted PE services should be provided in the least restrictive environment possible. According to Dr. Ronald W. Davis from Texas Women's University, "Laws requiring integration of students with disabilities could not be clearer; students with disabilities should have meaningful participation, equal opportunities and inclusion with students without disabilities to the maximum extent possible." I work to develop peer partners in the classes I teach. Peer partners are students without disabilities who work with the student with a disability to facilitate that student's participation and inclusion.

IEP

APE can be included in a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).



Sometimes parents/guardians need to advocate for their sons or daughters to have APE on their IEPs.

Classroom structure

Universal design of the classroom meets the needs of a broad spectrum of learners. Examples of universal design are a consistent structure, visual schedules, attention to transition, grab bars on the walls, three dimensional cues, class wide peer partners, the use of sign language and using auditory, visual, gestural and physical prompts. I try to provide a variety of activities using multiple strategies when I work with students.

Adaptations and modifications

The environment may need to be changed to meet the needs of the individual student or students. It is important to determine what activities the student likes or desires to do. Activities should be broken down into tasks and skills. The teacher needs to determine what the student is able to do, if the activity needs to be changed, what equipment is required and what supports are necessary. Some examples of adaptations are short, simplified rules, shorter or longer playing time, rule changes, increased rest time and slowing down the game, lowering the target, increasing the goal size, making the field smaller and removing obstacles. Games may be played sitting or lying down. The equipment may be smaller or larger, a different color, varying textures, lighter or softer. Balls may be suspended from stationary objects or partially deflated.

Activities

A variety of organizations provide recreational opportunities for people with special needs. Outdoorsforall is an organization in Seattle. There are others throughout the country. A good source for adapted PE information is:

www.pecentral.org/adapted/adaptedsites.html.

Lifetime activities

Our family enjoys recreational activities with Iselen, our daughter who has CdLS. These activities include, biking, swimming, hiking, dancing and walking the dog. Our family focus is on improving her lifetime fitness skills that will improve her overall health.

As an Adapted PE Specialist, I believe we are limited mostly by our lack of imagination and creativity regarding participation by students with disabilities in PE and extracurricular activities. We as





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parents and caregivers can make a difference in our sons' and daughters' lives by offering them opportunities to participate in recreational activities both in school and in the community.

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