



Alabama Adapted Physical
Education Best Practices

Quick
Reference
Guide





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Preface

The goal of the Adapted Physical Education Best Practices Quick Reference Guide is to enable physical educators to be successful in the implementation of adapted physical education. Adapted physical education is an individualized program of instruction created for students with disabilities that enables success in a physical education class. “Adapt” means to adjust or accommodate to meet the needs of students with disabilities. “Best practices” are those practices which are widely-agreed to have a high level of effectiveness.



This document was developed by the 2017 Adapted Physical Education Best Practices Task Force composed of adapted physical education teachers, elementary, middle school, high school physical educators, and college educators appointed by the Alabama Department of Education. The Task Force began work in February 2017. The quick reference guide is the result of a collaborative project of the Alabama State Department of Education and the Disability and Health Program of the Alabama Department of Public Health. The information provided in the document was supported in part by Grant/Cooperative Agreement Number 1 NU27DDo00017-01-00 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC.

Inclusive Environment

What is Inclusion?

The goal is to promote inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in school physical activity programs. Inclusion assumes that all children, 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
- Interact with peers of all ability levels with opportunities to develop friendships and learn to respect differences

Developing an Inclusive Environment

Education programs must afford students with disabilities opportunities equal to students without disabilities. A positive learning environment invites all students to participate in meaningful experiences that offer a variety of opportunities for personal success. A program is not equally effective if it results in students with disabilities being indiscriminately isolated or segregated. It is critical that teachers attend to the social



environment in order to protect all students from ridicule, exclusion, or discrimination. Unfortunately, students with disabilities are a common target for bullying. Areas of concern where bullying is likely to occur, and close supervision is critical, are in locker rooms, restrooms, lunchrooms, playgrounds, and competitive situations. The physical education classroom should set the stage for a schoolwide inclusive culture.

The following practices should be implemented in physical education programs involving students with disabilities:

- Students with disabilities will not be separated categorically from individuals without disabilities
- Students with disabilities will not be placed into segregated programs and activities solely due to their disabilities
- Students with disabilities are not to be removed from physical education class for other services
- Game rules may need to be relaxed to allow students to achieve the desired goal
- Measure success using a variety of methods (skill tests, journals, portfolios)
- Incorporate cooperative games and team building activities
- De-emphasize competitive team sport games with emphasis on sport skill development, fitness, and lifetime leisure activities
- Minimize wait time
- Avoid elimination games (games of elimination are considered an inappropriate practice for all students)
- Ensure safety rules are clearly communicated to all students, parents, and administration and consistently enforced
- Pre-selection by teacher for teams, groups, and partners (never allow students to choose teams, partners, or groups)

Physical Environment

Creating an atmosphere to foster learning is one of the most important tasks of teaching that will require teachers to implement strategies to include all students.

Possible considerations include:

- Enough space around equipment for it to be navigable by anyone, including those that use devices for mobility
- Creating small group stations and centers
- Adjusting the size of the environment or field of play
- Decreasing visual and/or auditory stimuli to the best extent possible
 - Headphones
 - Noise reducing equipment (use earplugs)
 - Sunglasses
 - Changing texture of an implement (use gloves, weighted vest, etc.)
- Surveying the activity surface to ensure it is smooth and remove barriers
- Making sure the area is clean, bright, and functional



Health and Safety

Through the use of supplementary supports, many safety concerns can be significantly reduced. It is important to implement the supports before placing a student in a more restrictive environment.

It is important to review the following safety factors when planning for inclusion:

- Ensure the lesson is age and developmentally appropriate for students with disabilities
- Survey the instructional environment for safety concerns (i.e., check for evenness of playing surface to prevent possible falls or wheelchair tipping)
- Ensure all equipment is safe and in good working order
- Have progressive lead-up/small sided activities in order to prevent injuries that may result from lack of preparation/practice
- Ensure students with disabilities are actively supervised
- Be aware of the school's emergency procedures
- Have padding, hand holds, and adaptive equipment readily available
- Define the playing field/area
- Use tape or paint to make it easier for the students to see boundaries
- Create a safe place for the students and make sure students know how to find it

It is important that all service providers receive an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) for chronic illnesses and know how to respond to emergencies. School nurses are a valuable resource who should always be consulted in regard to students with medical conditions.

Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) is a document that outlines health care to be provided to a student in the school setting, developed by the school nurse in conjunction with the student's parents or guardians, and may contain the orders from the physician, certified registered nurse practitioner operating under a valid collaborative agreement, or physician assistant operating with a valid supervisor agreement.

Know Your Team

The following people are a good source of information:

- **Special Education/Classroom teacher**
- **Case Manager**
- **Paraprofessional**
- **Nurse**
- **Administration**
- **Parents/Guardian**
- **Physical Therapist**
- **Occupational Therapist**
- **Speech Therapist**
- **Alabama State Department of Education Special Education Section 334-694-4782**
- **Alabama State Department of Education Instructional Services 334-694-4768**



The Role of the Paraeducator in Physical Education

Effective use of a paraeducator in the physical education class is invaluable. A paraeducator in physical education allows for closer supervision, greater staff-to-student ratio and a better opportunity for teaching and learning to occur for student success. The physical educator must communicate with instructional and personal assistants to encourage professionalism and trust. Areas to discuss are preplanning (knowing the curriculum beforehand) and feedback (performance based).

The roles and responsibilities for the paraeducator include but are not limited to:

- Be present, actively engaged, dressed appropriately to assist students with disabilities with instruction
- Work under direct supervision of the physical educator
- Assist the teacher with equipment and materials
- Provide all students with opportunities for positive learning and interpersonal experiences
- Be aware of health and medical concerns of students
- Be knowledgeable of safety issues
- Apply consistent classroom management techniques
- Assist the physical educator with the implementation of students' goals and objectives
- Provide support, suggestions, and feedback regarding the strategies and instruction that have been implemented
- Assist and supervise students to and from physical education
- Monitor/assist students during warm-ups and class activity
- Assist the teacher in collecting data and monitoring student progress

Peer Assistance

Peer assistance involves using peers, same age or older, to interact with children with disabilities to help keep them on task. It allows for individualized instruction and gives students with disabilities time in class to work on developmental skills vital to their involvement in physical activity in the future. Peer tutoring is an appropriate, effective way to set up meaningful practice with the opportunity for high rates of motor-appropriate practice. Both the child with a disability and their peer benefit from the interaction. Appropriate training should be given to the assistant to ensure quality instruction is provided. The training should include content related to disability knowledge, disability etiquette, disability awareness, communication, and instructional techniques by the teacher.

The benefits to students with disabilities include:

1. Sustained positive interactions and friendships
2. Increased opportunities to practice skills
3. Age-appropriate role models
4. Development of social behaviors and communication skills

Peer tutors gain from the experience by:

1. Increasing acceptance of individual differences
2. Developing a deeper sense of social justice and advocacy for others
3. Increasing self-esteem
4. Developing a better understanding of how to communicate with and provide assistance to people with disabilities

For more information on peer assistance, visit www.nchpad.org/109/846/Peer~Tutoring~in~General~Physical~Education.

To Modify or Accommodate

The ultimate goal is not to modify curriculum but to accommodate activities to allow students with disabilities to participate in the general physical education setting with their peers and be successful. Specially designed physical education occurs when modifications to the curriculum are made. This must be documented with benchmarks and goals within the Individualized Education Program (IEP). If goals and benchmarks are placed in the IEP the physical educator must be part of the IEP team.

Not every student with disabilities needs adapted physical education nor specially designed physical education.

Modification

Modifications are changes that are made to course content. When course content is modified (e.g., criteria altered or lowered) the student is not pursuing the required grade level content standards.

Accommodation

Accommodations are changes offered to students with disabilities to lessen the impact of the disability in the teaching and learning environment (i.e., minor adjustments such as using a larger ball, moving closer to a goal).

Modification IS NOT SYNONYMOUS with accommodation.

More information regarding modifications and accommodations can be found in the Alabama Adapted Physical Education and 504 Process State Guidelines.

Examples of modifications and accommodation may be found on YouTube Adapted Physical Education Channel https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2rgDMOa-PoD4ImJbCB2l_A.

Instructional Techniques

Clear communication is paramount for the success of all students. Be flexible and patient. Keep trying various techniques until you find what works for you and your students. Listed below are a few techniques.

Examples include:

- Keep instructions brief and simple
- Always face the student while talking
- Use descriptive verbal instruction
- Demonstrate/model the routine or activity
- Instructions may be printed out in large print and hung up for the student to see during the time of the lesson
- Oral prompts can be given
- If necessary, allow extra time for students with a disability to process your questions and ask questions of their own
- Use a variety of cues including pictures and symbols
- Use student's name before giving instructions
- Use interpreters to aid in facilitating communication when necessary
- Use illustrative means, such as paper and pencil or whiteboards
- Speak with a normal enunciation and volume
- Avoid loud, constant background noise
- Computer technology to provide additional information, visual demonstrations, or repetition of instructions (i.e. tablet and/or iPad)
- Go from less difficult to more difficult skills and break down skills into their component parts (E.g. catching a ball: Bounce the ball to the student from a short distance away. Gradually increase the distance, but eliminate the bounce. Then increase the distance again.)

Equipment

Equipment selection will vary upon activity, student population, facility, surface, and purpose.

Specific examples include:

- Changes in size, texture, weight, color and function of equipment (i.e., a very large ball, or lightweight ball instead of a volleyball)
- Balls with sound to assist in tracking
- Velcro or other strapping devices to enhance grip on rackets or bat
- Heart rate monitors to ensure safe heart rate zone. (Do not use heart rate zones for students with spinal cord injury. Their heart rate response might be impaired due to the lesion. Use perceptive measures such as the Borg Scale of Perceived Exhaustion.)
- Assistive technology (i.e. one step button, voice output devices, button activator)
- Use light colored or larger equipment, preferably white, yellow, or orange
- Use different equipment to slow down the action
- Use a pool noodle or other equipment to assist in expanding reach
- Attach equipment to a wheelchair or walker (bumpers or ramps)
- Use large scooter boards for mobility
- Allow students to use manual wheelchairs or power chairs to participate
- Use proper lighting and color contrast. A ball can be covered with bright yellow tape to contrast with the floor and walls. Color tape can be used to mark the playing areas on the floor or walls.
- For tag games, use bells on the person who is "it"

Methods of Adaptation

Suggested Equipment Adaptations

- Larger/lighter bat
- Use of Velcro
- Larger goals/targets
- Lower goals/targets/nets
- Scoops for catching
- Balls in various sizes, weights, colors, and textures
- Balls with sound devices

Procedures

- Position student close to the instructor (front row)
- Modeling of activity
- Partner/peer assistance
- Changes in time limits
- Oral prompting
- Visual cues
- Changes in space requirements
- Changes in rules

- Changing position from standing to sitting when necessary
- Changing pace of the activity
- Provision for increased rest period
- Use of different body parts
- Give continuous verbal cues

Skill Sequence

- Mirroring of skill
- Skills broken down into very small parts
- Teacher assistance with movement (hand over hand)
- Simplified patterns

Facilities

- Decreased fields or court distance
- Decrease of playing area
- Well-defined boundary



Adaptations for Skills and Activities

Locomotor Skills

- Students may use devices to assist, such as a wheelchair, walker, cane, or braces
- Use a guide rope for students who are visually impaired
- Obstacle courses allowing students to step over objects placed at various heights
- Use tape lines or footprints as a guide
- Provide visual instructions
- Allow students to begin an endurance run early to provide extra time and enable the student to finish with the class
- Provide a slanted rope for jumping to allow students to choose a comfortable height
- The use of a small trampoline can help children improve their jumping, especially for those who have low muscle tone
- Students using a wheelchair can perform push-ups in the chair or move their arms up and down in the motion of jumping. Slow the pace of the activity, shorten the distance, and remove time restraints.

Non-locomotor Skills

- Use 3-4 simple short cues that are visually accessible to the students for each type of activity
- Demonstrate the skill (visual) slowly and simply explain the skill (auditory). Allow for lots of practice time (tactile)
- Use hand over hand assistance (if needed) to help the students through the motions
- Use carpeted rather than slick surfaces
- Use wider boards instead of balance beams
- Use a variety of equipment: slant boards, mini trampolines, airflow mats
- Provide opportunities for students to challenge their balance (stunting)
- When introducing balancing tasks, start with activities on and along the floor. Gradually introduce other equipment that increases the distance of an activity from the floor and decreases the base of support.
- Teach balance techniques (widen base, extend arms). Place students near walls for support or allow students to hold a peer's hand.

Manipulative Skills

Throwing

- Increase target size for novice students, decrease target size for advanced students
- Decrease distance of target for novice students; increase distance of target for advanced students
- Vary the height of the target (using a volleyball net will foster a high ball release for higher or further targets)
- Provide a variety of sizes, shapes, textures, and inflation levels of objects
- Use visually friendly objects (to throw and throw at)
- Add sound to the target (to increase motivation level and indicate the target has been hit)
- For students who have difficulty grasping/releasing, have them push a ball off a ramp to enhance inclusion into the activity

Catching

- Use a bell ball (auditory), bumpy ball (tactile), soft vibrating ball (tactile) and other balls of various sizes and inflation levels
- Decrease distance ball is tossed, rolled, or bounced
- Rolling/bouncing a ball provides more time to visually track a ball

- Use brightly colored objects/balls that add motivation
- Provide students the opportunity to catch an object using a basket or bucket
- Good objects to use for catching: stuffed animal, beach ball, scarf, deflated ball, foam ball, bumpy ball, bell ball, balloons (be aware of latex allergies), fleece balls

Kicking

- Use a bell ball (auditory), bumpy ball (tactile), soft vibrating ball (tactile) and other balls of various sizes and inflation levels
- The use of poly spots (markers) to indicate where to stand, which foot to step with, and the correct location to kick with on the striking foot helps the child understand the task better
- A partly deflated large therapy ball can be used to help children using wheelchairs and/or crutches to control a ball more effectively within a kicking/dribbling game
- Attaching a crate to the front of a wheelchair/walker can allow the child to have more success at “kicking” a partly deflated ball around

- By placing the ball up on a half dome cone, it keeps the ball from rolling and brings it up closer to meet the shoelaces (allowing for a more mature striking pattern)
- Use brightly colored objects/balls to add motivation

Dribbling

- Foot Dribbling: Use a deflated ball that will not travel as far and then increase the amount of air according to students abilities
- Provide a variety of sizes, shapes, textures and inflation levels of objects
- Move the ground (table) up to foster successful dribbling and/or decrease the playing area
- Give students a large ball (PT ball) to push with their wheelchair or attach a milk crate to the foot rests of the wheelchair to guide the ball (Foot Dribbling)

Striking

- Begin with large objects (balloons, beach balls)
- Vary the speed of moving objects (scarves/balloons move slower than balls)
- Use tees and suspended balls
- Start with body parts and then provide a variety of sizes and weights of striking implements

- Use beeper balls for students with visual impairments

Rhythms and Dance

- Dance is a time for self-expression and the students should be praised when they are expressing themselves in a positive way
- Use music with a slow rhythm
- Use modern (age appropriate) music when teaching classic dances
- Give students poly spots or tape to provide a visual destination to move to
- Perform the demonstration movements facing away from the class so that the students can mirror movements
- Break the dance steps/movements down into small parts and allow for lots of review/practice
- Students with lower limb limitations can dance using their arms when intricate foot work is being completed. They may use a combination of moving their own wheelchair/walker and moving their feet.
- Allow student to omit more difficult moves in order to keep up with the rest of the group

Fitness Activities

Aerobics/Agility/Balance

- Slower pace
- Reduced number of actions
- Changed locomotor patterns
- Use physical supports

Obstacle Course

- Greater time limit
- Partner assistance
- Lower obstacles
- Fewer obstacles

Weight Training

- Teacher supervised activity
- Individualized program
- Modified grips and techniques
- Decrease repetitions and weight



Sport Activities

Basketball

- Modify rules
- Use of various size balls
- Use of large, lower, or various goals
- Allow steps with ball
- Allow 2 hand dribbling
- Slow the pace of the game
- Allow student in wheelchair to hold ball on legs

Bowling

- Simplify or reduce number of approach steps
- Use of 2 hands
- Remain at a stationary position
- Use of ramps

- Allow seated position when applicable

Flag Football

- Use a larger, softer football
- Modifications to football, i.e. handle on ball
- Modification of rules and distance

Golf

- Use of club with larger head
- Use of shorter, lighter clubs
- Use of larger ball
- Use of tee on all shots

Handball

- Use larger ball
- Decrease court/field size



- Use larger goal
- Use racquet instead of hand

Floor Hockey

- Use of softer, larger equipment (Pillow Polo)
- Smaller playing area
- Larger goal

Table Tennis

- Larger paddles
- Larger ball
- Lower net
- Larger table

Racquet sports (Tennis, Badminton)

- Use of larger, lighter balls
- Shorter, lighter racquets
- Larger head racquets
- Lower net, or no net
- Brightly colored balls
- Hit ball off a tee or string
- Allow drop serve
- Modify rules, i.e. allowing bounces
- Replace badminton shuttlecock with balloons
- Reduce or increase court size

Soccer/Speedball

- Reduce playing area
- Use of deflated ball, “nerf” ball or playground ball
- Use of walking instead of running
- Limit areas of movement

- Allow student in wheelchair student to carry ball
- Increase goal size
- Attach hockey stick to chair

Softball

- Use of larger, or smaller bats
- Use of Velcro balls and mitts
- Use of softer ball or wiffle ball or wiffle bats
- Use of batting tees
- Shortened pitching and base distance
- Allow student in wheelchair to push ball off tee
- Positioning of players based on disabilities
- Larger, more distinguishable bases
- Modify outs and strike-out rules

Track and Field

- Modify distances
- Simplify techniques
- Partner assistance

Volleyball

- Use of balloons, beach balls, or other larger, lighter balls
- Allow players to catch ball
- Allow players to throw ball
- Reduce height of net
- Reduce size of playing court
- Allow ball to bounce

Recreational Activities

Flying Disc

- A foam flying disc
- Change size of the field
- Closer larger target

Horseshoes

- Shorter distance
- Larger or lighter horseshoes

Juggling

- Balloons (Latex Allergy)
- Lighter, larger, softer balls
- Scarves
- Juggle against a wall or flat surface

Shuffleboard

- Decrease distance
- Larger court

Kickball

- Kick stationary ball
- Allow kicker to sit in chair when needed
- Allow kicker to use ramp to propel ball
- Decrease base distance
- Larger bases
- Increase of ball size
- Adapt rules

Project Adventure

- Greater time limit
- Partner assistance
- Lower obstacles

Relays

- Shorter distances
- Integration of teams
- Modification of skills



Alabama Physical Fitness Assessment

Suggested Modifications for Children with Disabilities for the Physical Fitness Assessment

It is acceptable to set individual goals for a child with disabilities, make them challenging but realistic.

Aerobic Capacity General Accommodations

PACER

- Does not have to follow cadence
- Go up, and wait for peers to go up and back, then join peers again going back
- Walk one and run one (same if in wheelchair)
- Run with a partner who can help with cadence and encouragement
- Audio and visual cues (clickers, arrows)

One Mile Walk/Run

- Run width and walk length (or vice versa)
- Have smaller targets such as cones every 100 yards that child can run to and touch, then rest, then run to next cone
- Hold a bean bag and run drop it into bucket 100 yards away. Then pick up another bean bag to run and drop into another bucket 100 yards away
- Run (push wheelchair) with partner who can help with pace and encouragement (child who is visually impaired can hold hands with peer or can hold a small rope between peer and child who is visually impaired)

Upper Body Strength and Endurance General Accommodations

90 Degree Push-Up with Cadence

- Do without cadence
- Put something under child such as a book to make the distance the child has to go shorter

- Do reverse pushup - start in up position and slowly go down trying to resist flopping to the ground; repeat
- Have something on the back like a book to help get a feel for a straight back
- Put marks on the floor to help child understand correct hand position
- Physically assist child a few times to help get into correct position
- Push up against a wall to get correct straight back position
- Do modified push-up (knees bent)
- Push self-up from wheelchair by pushing up in armrests (similar to dips)
- Use a wedge

Abdominal Strength and Endurance General Accommodations

Curl-Up with Cadence

- Do without cadence
- Physically assist a few times to show how to do it correctly
- Have visual and tactile cues for where hands should start and how far they should go
- Do reverse sit up - start in up position and resist as you fall back to mat
- Allow child to hold on to knees and just lean back and forth to get some work on abdominals
- Hold child's hands or hold stick and gently assist child allowing child to do as much work as possible
- Have child do sit ups on inclined wedge (or mats) to make it easier to sit up

Flexibility General Accommodations

- Physically assist a few times to show how to do it correctly
- Start with easy task for success (e.g., touch knees). Then, gradually ask child to move farther down leg
- Hold for shorter amount of time (e.g., 1-2 seconds), rest, and then repeat
- Put tape marks on leg as a visual/tactile goal

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