



ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION BEST PRACTICES GUIDEBOOK

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Adapted Physical Education Best Practices Guidebook



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
■ PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDEBOOK	6
Differences and Similarities of Physical Education and Adapted Physical Education	6
Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Are Not Substitutes for Physical Education	6
FEDERAL LAW & BOARD RULES	7
■ INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)	7
■ BOARD RULES	7
■ REQUIREMENTS TO TEACH ADAPTED PE	9
BEST PRACTICES	10
■ ASSESSMENTS AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES (34 CFR § 300.304)	10
■ ENVIRONMENT	10
■ HEALTH AND SAFETY	11
■ INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM	12
■ ROLE OF A CLASSROOM TEACHER OR PARAEDUCATOR IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION	12
■ PEER TUTOR OR ASSISTANT	13
■ MODIFY OR ACCOMMODATE	13
■ ADAPTATIONS	14
VOCABULARY	15
RESOURCES	16

INTRODUCTION

■ PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDEBOOK

The purpose of this guidebook is to educate, support, and clarify the practices of adapted physical education programs and procedures throughout the state of Utah.

This guide provides basic information to evaluate, improve and maintain quality adapted physical education services. It is a resource for local education agencies (LEAs) to use in developing adapted physical education programs, policies, and procedures to address the physical education needs of individuals with disabilities.

Differences and Similarities of Physical Education and Adapted Physical Education

We hope to clarify the differences and similarities among physical education and adapted physical education teachers, occupational therapists, and physical therapists. This guidebook will help to clarify the role of the adapted physical education teacher and include best practices for inclusion within the physical education setting. This guidebook will also help to identify physical education service delivery options.

For more information about Adapted P.E., visit the [National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities](https://www.ncpeid.org/apens-what-is-ape) (<https://www.ncpeid.org/apens-what-is-ape>).

Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Are Not Substitutes for Physical Education

Physical therapy and occupational therapy are related services. Physical education is a direct service provided by the endorsed Physical Education or Adapted Physical Education educator. Physical therapy and occupational therapy complement the physical educator as many of the skills needed by students are used in the physical education setting.

[NCHPAD Guide](https://www.nchpad.org/fppics/NCHPAD_PT-OT%20Tips_A.pdf) (https://www.nchpad.org/fppics/NCHPAD_PT-OT%20Tips_A.pdf)

FEDERAL LAW & BOARD RULES

■ INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

States and schools are required to provide equal opportunity to participate in physical education and extracurricular athletics by children and youth with and without disabilities. See [Creating Equitable Opportunities for Children and Youth with Disabilities to Access Physical Education and Extracurricular Athletics](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/creating-equitable-opportunities-for-children-and-youth-with-disabilities-to-access-physical-education-and-extracurricular-athletics/) (https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/creating-equitable-opportunities-for-children-and-youth-with-disabilities-to-access-physical-education-and-extracurricular-athletics/).

IDEA defines special education as “specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability, including (A) instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and (B) instruction in physical education.” IDEA section 602(29). See [Policy Letter](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/policy-letter-may-12-2021-to-tymeson/) (https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/policy-letter-may-12-2021-to-tymeson/).

■ BOARD RULES

[Utah Special Education/Board Rule — PHYSICAL EDUCATION \(34 CFR § 300.108\)](https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/9489d09b-5ede-462b-a135-4ee55918b431) (https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/9489d09b-5ede-462b-a135-4ee55918b431)

1. Physical education services, specially designed, if necessary, must be made available to every student with a disability receiving a free appropriate public education (FAPE), unless the LEA enrolls students without disabilities and does not provide physical education to students without disabilities in the same grades.
2. Each student with a disability must be afforded the opportunity to participate in the regular physical education program available to students who are nondisabled unless:
 - a. The student is enrolled full time in a separate facility, or
 - b. The student needs specially designed physical education, as prescribed in the student’s individualized education program (IEP).
3. If specially designed physical education (for example, adapted physical education) is prescribed in a student’s IEP, the LEA responsible for the education of that student must provide the services directly or make arrangements for those services to be provided through other public or private programs.

4. The LEA responsible for the education of a student with a disability who is enrolled in a separate facility must ensure that the student receives appropriate physical education services.

[Nonacademic Settings and Extracurricular Activities \(34 CFR § 300.117 AND UCA 53G-6-709\)](https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/9489d09b-5ede-462b-a135-4ee55918b431) (<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/9489d09b-5ede-462b-a135-4ee55918b431>)

1. In providing or arranging for the provision of nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities, including meals, recess periods, and the services and activities in these Rules III.V, each LEA must ensure that each student with a disability participates with students who are nondisabled in the extracurricular services and activities to the *maximum* extent appropriate to the needs of that student.
2. The LEA must ensure that each student with a disability has the supplementary aids and services determined by the student's IEP team to be appropriate and necessary for the student to participate in nonacademic settings.

A student with a disability (under the age of 22 who has not graduated from high school with a regular high school diploma, whose IEP Team recommends participation) may not be denied the opportunity of participating in public school programs or extracurricular activities solely because of the student's age, unless the participation threatens the health or safety of the student. The school district or charter school, in cooperation with the Utah Department of Health, shall establish criteria used to determine the health and safety factor (UCA 53G-6-709).

[Nonacademic Services \(34 CFR § 300.107\) Activities](https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/9489d09b-5ede-462b-a135-4ee55918b431)

(<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/9489d09b-5ede-462b-a135-4ee55918b431>)

1. Each LEA must take steps, including the provision of supplementary aids and services determined appropriate and necessary by the student's IEP Team, to provide nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities in the manner necessary to afford students with disabilities an equal opportunity for participation in those services and activities.
2. Nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities may include counseling services, athletics, transportation, health services, recreational activities, special interest groups or clubs sponsored by the LEA, referrals to agencies that provide assistance to individuals with disabilities, and employment of students, including both employment by the LEA and assistance in making outside employment available.

■ REQUIREMENTS TO TEACH ADAPTED PE

[Educator License Requirements \(R277-301, R277-304, R277-306, and R277-320\)](https://www.schools.utah.gov/administrativerules) (<https://www.schools.utah.gov/administrativerules>)

[Special Education Rule—Qualification to Teach Adapted Physical Education](https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/9489d09b-5ede-462b-a135-4ee55918b431) (<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/9489d09b-5ede-462b-a135-4ee55918b431>)

1. Professionals providing services to students with disabilities must hold a Utah Professional Educator License or endorsement in the area in which they provide services. This includes special education teachers, speech/language pathologists, school psychologists, school social workers, and other professionals. Physical and occupational therapists must hold appropriate Utah licensure. The school district superintendent or charter school administration shall be responsible for the evaluation of the appropriateness of licenses and endorsements when assigning staff members. LEAs should refer to the USBE Teaching, Leadership, and Paraeducator Standards.
2. “License areas of concentration” or “license area” means a designation on a license of the specific educational setting or role for which the individual is qualified, to include the following:
 - a. Early Childhood;
 - b. Elementary;
 - c. Secondary;
 - d. School Leadership
 - e. Career and Technical Education or “CTE”;
 - f. School Counselor;
 - g. School Psychologist;
 - h. Special Education;
 - i. Preschool Special Education;
 - j. Deaf Education;
 - k. Speech-Language Pathologist;
 - l. Speech-Language Technician;
 - m. School Social Worker; and
 - n. Audiologist. (R277-301-2.7(a)).
3. Individuals providing psychological evaluation services for students with disabilities must hold a Utah education license for school psychologists or State licensure and meet the assessment publisher’s criteria for administration.
4. An adapted physical education endorsement is required for special educators and general educators to teach adapted physical education. For more guidance with this topic, please contact the USBE Physical Education Specialist.

■ ASSESSMENTS AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES (34 CFR § 300.304)

Assessments and other evaluation materials include those tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely those that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient.

The student is assessed in all areas related to their disability. This may include vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor skills.

Types of Motor Assessments could include:

- APEA — five through 18.
- Brigance — birth through seven.
- Brockport — 10 through 17 years.
- Fitness Gram — Fitness assessment.
- PDMS — Peabody Developmental Motor Scales — birth through six and a half years.
- TGMD — Test of Gross Motor Development — ages three through ten years.

Assessment data and qualification should be recorded in the student's IEP file. If a student doesn't qualify for adapted physical education services, adapted physical education services should not be on the IEP.

More information: [Selection and Application of Assessment Tools](https://www.pecentral.org/adapted/assessment_instruments_diane.pdf)
(https://www.pecentral.org/adapted/assessment_instruments_diane.pdf)

■ ENVIRONMENT

Social Environment — The goal is to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in school physical education programs. Students have the right to be respected and appreciated as valuable members of the school community, fully participate in school activities as much as they are able and interact with their peers of all ability levels with opportunities to develop friendships and respect differences. 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 should be in the least restrictive environment. For some students, it may be more beneficial to be in their own adapted physical education class or receive services in a one-on-one environment.
- Students are not to be removed from physical education class for other services.
- Game rules and equipment may need to be adapted to all students' needs.
- The goals in the class can be met in a variety of ways, for example, skill tests, journals, portfolios, and videos.
- Instruction is aligned with standards, and rigor is expected for all students.
- Lifetime activities, fitness, and sport skill development are emphasized.
- Programs should minimize wait time and elimination games should be avoided.
- Programs need to ensure safety is a priority and consistently provided.
- Educators shall select teams, groups, and partners for students with disabilities.
- Social and leadership opportunities are provided for students with disabilities.

Physical Environment — Creating an environment where the atmosphere is inclusive for all students and fosters learning. Items to consider when choosing an environment for students to learn:

- The environment needs to be accessible for all students. (Surfaces, temperature, space)
- The size of the field or environment is adjusted to maximize student engagement.
- Flexibility should be given for student comfort such as student clothes, sunglasses, headphones, etc.
- The environment is safe: the gameplay, the location within the classroom, and equipment uses are all safe.
- Equipment may need to be adapted to meet safety factors.

■ HEALTH AND SAFETY

Student health and safety are the top priority. Support must be implemented to ensure successful health and safety measures are followed. Supports should be considered and implemented before a student is moved to a more restrictive environment. Students with disabilities should be actively supervised. Additional adult supervision or instruction may be needed to assist the instructor

depending on the needs of the student(s) attending the course to provide an optimal learning experience for all students.

It is suggested all important medical information be on file at the school before student(s) participate in a physical education class. The physical education instructor needs to be aware of this information to ensure safe practices. The physical education instructor should communicate with the parents and the school nurse to stay up to date on critical medical information.

■ INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

[Utah State Special Education Rules](https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/9489d09b-5ede-462b-a135-4ee55918b431)

(<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/9489d09b-5ede-462b-a135-4ee55918b431>)

Possible people on the team: administrator/LEA, case manager, parent, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, adapted physical education teacher, general education teacher.

If physical education items are on the IEP, the physical education teacher or adapted physical education teacher should be putting the present levels, goals, or other information in the IEP document. Physical education data for the student should be listed. Communication about progress and performance with the case holder and parent(s) should be prior to the meeting.

Adapted physical education is not a related service. It is a core subject. There are course codes listed for adapted physical education.

You can find a [physical education checklist](https://www.ncpeid.org/assets/1.%20IEP%20checklist.pdf) to use before an IEP meeting on the NCPEID website (<https://www.ncpeid.org/assets/1.%20IEP%20checklist.pdf>).

More information: [IEP Information from P.E. Central](https://www.pecentral.org/adapted/adaptediep.html)

(<https://www.pecentral.org/adapted/adaptediep.html>)

■ ROLE OF A CLASSROOM TEACHER OR PARAEDUCATOR IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

[Utah State Board of Education Paraeducator Manual](https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/0ecaf200-77b2-4f85-aa44-3f17af07c9e4)

(<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/0ecaf200-77b2-4f85-aa44-3f17af07c9e4>)

Effective support from a classroom teacher or paraeducator is invaluable! The support from these educators allows for closer supervision, increased safety, and quality opportunities for learning to occur ensuring greater student success. Close communication is vital! Professionalism and trust are encouraged by the physical education teacher.

The roles and responsibilities of support educators in the physical education classroom:

- Be present and actively engaged.
- Work under the direct supervision of the physical education teacher.
- Assist the teacher with equipment and materials.
- Assist and support the physical education teacher with behavioral issues and plans. It is best practice if there is a behavior plan being used in the classroom. The behavior plan should be used in the student's other classes and activities.
- Apply consistent classroom management techniques.
- Be knowledgeable of safety issues.
- Be aware of health and medical concerns of the students.
- Assist the teacher with the goals of the students.
- Provide support, suggestions, and feedback regarding the strategies and instruction that have been implemented.
- Assist and supervise students (who need it) to and from physical education.
- Assist the teacher in collecting data, recording, grading, and monitoring student progress.

Additional Information: [Paraeducator Information](https://www.pecentral.org/adapted/paraeducators.html)
(<https://www.pecentral.org/adapted/paraeducators.html>)

■ PEER TUTOR OR ASSISTANT

Peer assistance involves using peers of the same age or older to interact, teach, and model skills for students with disabilities. This is an appropriate way to practice sport skills, social skills, communication skills, and behavior appropriateness.

Training should be given to peer tutors to ensure positive outcomes.

Communication between the Physical Education teacher and peer tutor is essential.

[Peer Tutoring in General Education](https://www.nchpad.org/109/846/Peer~Tutoring~in~General~Physical~Education) (<https://www.nchpad.org/109/846/Peer~Tutoring~in~General~Physical~Education>)

■ MODIFY OR ACCOMMODATE

[Utah Core Standards](https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/6192280d-2ab2-4ff1-b5dd-a9c2f95c1b11) (<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/6192280d-2ab2-4ff1-b5dd-a9c2f95c1b11>)

The goal is not to modify the physical education 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

instruction occurs when adapting the content, methodology, or delivery of the curriculum. Specially designed instruction must be documented to align with the goals in the IEP. If services, goals, and objectives are on the IEP, the physical educator must be part of the IEP team.

Modifications are changes in course content.

Accommodations are changes in the equipment, rules, and environment to lessen the impact of the disability in the teaching and learning environment.

■ ADAPTATIONS

Adaptations can be made in the following areas:

Equipment: Use larger and lighter equipment, Velcro (double-sided suggested), lower targets and goals, balls of various sizes and softness, balls with sounds, scoops, and hula hoops for targets.

Purpose: Develop motor skills and work on physical fitness, participation, and enjoyment/satisfaction.

Players or Individuals Involved: Reconstruct your basketball team from a typical team of five players to a more developmental team that could have six to eight players.

Movements: Use standard warm-ups of high knees, grapevine, skipping, and inch worms for students with those abilities; those without those abilities can work on those skills and walk as needed.

Environment: Change regulation boundaries, decreasing them in size until appropriate — for example, from regulation soccer position boundaries to “zone soccer” where students will play or work on skills in their area. Change facilities from an outdoor field of grass to a hard floor or pavement for wheelchair use.

Limitations: Allow some students to practice skills and allow them open access to the goal — but no stealing the ball — per their ability.

Task Complexity: Easy to difficult activity — stationary, slow-moving, fast-moving gameplay.

Procedures: Use positioning, modeling, partner assistance, changes in time limits, oral and physical prompting, visual cues, rules, the pacing of activity, and increased transition time.

VOCABULARY

Object Control or Manipulative Skills: Skills developed to assist a person in throwing, catching, or redirecting the flight of a ball or other object.

Locomotor Skills: Skills used to move the body from one place to another. Basic locomotor steps include walking, running, hopping, jumping, leaping, skipping, sliding, and galloping.

Outdoor Recreation and Leisure Activities: Outdoor recreation or outdoor activity refers to recreation engaged in out of doors, most commonly in natural settings. Outdoor recreation includes activities that are designed for all levels of ability and should be facilitated to provide accommodations and adaptations as necessary. When the activity involves exceptional excitement, physical challenge, or risk, it is sometimes referred to as “adventure recreation” or “adventure training,” rather than an extreme sport. By participating in these activities, students learn about not only lifelong leisure activities but also about safety, risk, decision-making, problem-solving, leadership, and communication skills while participating in physically demanding activities.

RESOURCES

Documents and Websites

[Utah State Special Education Rules](https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/9489d09b-5ede-462b-a135-4ee55918b431)

(<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/9489d09b-5ede-462b-a135-4ee55918b431>)

[Utah State Paraeducator Manual](https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/0ecaf200-77b2-4f85-aa44-3f17af07c9e4)

(<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/0ecaf200-77b2-4f85-aa44-3f17af07c9e4>)

[Utah State IEP Reflective Framework](https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/ec62d07e-a8c3-4a62-9b5b-27396791e837)

(<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/ec62d07e-a8c3-4a62-9b5b-27396791e837>)

[Utah State Accommodations and Modifications](https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/e17b25a7-f61e-4793-bc3a-bc0512545893)

(<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/e17b25a7-f61e-4793-bc3a-bc0512545893>)

[National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities](https://www.ncpeid.org/)

(<https://www.ncpeid.org/>)

[NCHPAD Building Healthy Inclusive Communities](https://www.nchpad.org/Educators)

(<https://www.nchpad.org/Educators>)

[NCPEID Teaching Resources Adapted Activities](https://www.pecentral.org/adapted/adaptedactivities.html)

(<https://www.pecentral.org/adapted/adaptedactivities.html>)

[Standards for Adapted Physical Education Teachers](https://www.ncpeid.org/apens-15-standards)

(<https://www.ncpeid.org/apens-15-standards>)

Facebook Groups

[Adapted Physical Education](https://www.facebook.com/groups/AdaptedPE)

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AdaptedPE>)

[Adapted PE Specialist Preschool Group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/789989068042959/)

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/789989068042959/>)

Professional Organizations

[University of Wisconsin Graduate Projects](https://www.facebook.com/groups/789989068042959/)

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/789989068042959/>)

[SHAPEAmerica: APE Teacher's Toolbox](https://www.shapeamerica.org/publications/resources/teachingtools/teacher-toolbox/Teachers_Toolbox.aspx?hkey=10cff162-c377-4a71-9182-3373635d9626)

(https://www.shapeamerica.org/publications/resources/teachingtools/teacher-toolbox/Teachers_Toolbox.aspx?hkey=10cff162-c377-4a71-9182-3373635d9626)

[SHAPEAmerica: Unified Physical Activity Guide](#)

(https://www.shapeamerica.org/ResourcesPublications/Unified_PE/default.aspx?hkey=85976634-3270-47b8-bc64-56dedfe292db)

[Alabama Adapted Physical Education Best Practices Task Force](#)

[Members' Quick Reference Guide](#)

(<https://www.alabamaachieves.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Alabama-Adapted-PE-Best-Practices-Quick-Reference-Guide.pdf>)

Journals and Articles

[Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly](#)

(<https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/apaq/apaq-overview.xml>)

[Teaching Exceptional Children](#)

(<https://exceptionalchildren.org/store/journals/teaching-exceptional-children-journal-adaptive-physical-education-volume-54-issue-1>)

[Council For Exceptional Children](#)

(<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00400599211038380>)



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