



Adapted Physical Education

Individual with Disabilities Education Act (2004) defines physical education as the development of (a) Physical and motor fitness, (b) Fundamental motor skills and patterns, and (c) Skills in aquatics, dance, and individual and group games and sports (including intramural and lifetime sports) and (ii) includes special Physical Education, Adapted Physical Education, movement education, and motor development (CFR 300.17).ⁱ

Adapted Physical Education is the art and science of developing, implementing, and monitoring a carefully designed physical education instructional program for students with disabilities based on a comprehensive assessment. It is specially designed instruction that addresses the individualized needs of students with disabilities that require modifications in physical education to benefit from instruction in the least restrictive environment. Adaptations and modifications are made to ensure that each student will successfully and safely participate in an accessible physical education environment. Quality physical education programs provide the skills necessary for a lifetime of rich leisure, recreation, and sport experiences to enhance physical fitness and wellness and promote an active lifestyle.

The adapted physical education is a primary instructional service, not a related service, because physical education for children with disabilities is a federally mandated component of special education services [U.S.C.A. 1402 (25)].ⁱⁱ Adapted physical education can be a stand-alone service on an Individualized Education Program. Adapted physical education, occupational therapy and physical therapy are not interchangeable services. Occupational therapy and physical therapy are related services to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education under IDEA Sec. 300.34 (a).ⁱⁱⁱ Adapted physical education teachers have specific content knowledge and training in physical education instruction. This includes how to adapt and modify the physical education curriculum in instruction, equipment and activities for students with disabilities. Occupational therapists and physical therapists are not trained in physical education curriculum and instruction.

The responsibilities of the adapted physical education teacher include:

- Complete comprehensive motor assessments of individuals with disabilities and making specific program recommendations
- Provide direct services to students who are found eligible for special education and in need of adapted physical education and/or consult with physical education staff providing physical education instruction for students with disabilities
- Serve as an IEP member at IEP meetings
- Monitor student progress
- Advocate for students and families
- Provide resources to students, families and school staff

Exercise is the single
best thing you can do
for your brain in terms
of mood, memory and
learning.

John Ratey. 2008. Spark. The Revolutionary
New Science of Exercise and the Brain



American schools have backed away from physical education classes in favor of rigorous academic focus so that the United States can compete in a challenging and advanced global market. While this may seem like a reasonable and necessary thing to do, it does more harm than good. According to studies by NASPE and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), attending physical education classes is directly related to better academic performance and attitude toward school. Physical activity promotes brain function and psychological well-being, reduces anxiety, and increases overall energy and attention span.

Additionally, a report released by the World Health Organization (WHO) concludes that physical activity as taught in physical education classes and school sports can help prevent risky behaviors like smoking, doing drugs, drinking alcohol, and unhealthy eating; antisocial behaviors and violence; and pregnancy. The report concludes that “There is a clear consensus that children and youth should be involved in physical activity on a regular basis, and that teaching/reward systems should encourage active participation and enjoyment by all students, not just the highly skilled.”^{iv}

This CDE guidance document is meant for clarification, is not legally binding, and is not to be confused with legal advice. This guidance reflects CDE’s recommendations, but Administrative Units (AUs) may have developed their own policies or procedures that differ from those described herein. Be sure to refer to your local AU’s policies and procedures through the Director of Special Education. If you are seeking legal advice, please contact your legal counsel.

The contents of this handout were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

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References:

- ⁱ U.S. Government Publishing Office. Electronic Code of Federal Regulations. 8 Mar. 2016. Web. 10 Mar. 2016.
- ⁱⁱ Legal Information Institute. Cornell University Law School. 20 USC 1402. U.S. Code, 4 Jan. 2012. Web. 10, Mar. 2016.
- ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. Building the Legacy: IDEA 2004. U.S. Department of Education. 3 Aug. 2006. Web. 10 Mar. 2016.
- ^{iv} Gambling with our Future, Part 2: Implications of Removing Physical Education from Schools. The Official SPARK Blog. SPARK. Web. 10 Mar. 2016.

Resources:

Adapted Physical Education National Standards (APENS) <http://www.apens.org/>
SPARK <http://www.sparkpe.org/>