

Handy Handouts®

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Adapted P.E.—Physical Education for Children with Special Needs

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What Is Adapted P.E.?

Physical Education (P.E.) in school uses games, sports, and physical activities to teach students about health and fitness, as well as help them develop their motor (muscle movement) skills. Some students with disabilities may find it difficult to participate in P.E. activities. For example, a student who has a physical handicap and is in a wheelchair may not be able to participate in baseball with peers in regular P.E. class. **Adapted P.E. is an alternative to regular physical education—the activities in adapted P.E. are “adapted” or modified to meet the needs of students with disabilities.**

So that students with special needs may participate in games, sports, and physical activities, adapted P.E. offers alternatives for participation. Students in adapted P.E. may use different equipment, the rules for activities might be changed slightly, P.E. services might be in a different location, or instructions may be given to the student in a different way. For example, in adapted P.E., a student in a wheelchair may be allowed to hit the baseball from a tee and classmates may have to wait eight seconds before trying to tag the student out.

How Is Adapted P.E. Different from Physical Therapy?

Students are only eligible for physical therapy if they cannot learn without it. For example, a student who has difficulty sitting due to a disability may need **physical therapy** in order to be able to sit in a classroom and learn what the teacher is teaching. **Physical education** is given to ALL students.



Adapted P.E. gives students with disabilities the chance to participate in the physical education programs that all students participate in.

How Do Children Qualify for Adapted P.E. Services?

In order to qualify for adapted P.E. services, a student must receive an evaluation to find out what kind of physical activities he/she may need help with. A qualified professional who has training to understand the results of the evaluation and make recommendations for services conducts the assessment. After the evaluation, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team (made up of parents, members of the evaluation team, general education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, and/or therapists) meets to discuss the results and service recommendations. If the IEP team decides that adapted P.E. is necessary, they add goals to the IEP and the student begins to receive services.



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What Types of Services Are Available with Adapted P.E.?

The types of services available for students who are eligible for adapted P.E. vary greatly. The adapted P.E. teacher might give the regular P.E. teacher suggestions for changes to the rules, equipment, or instructions. The student may receive assistance in the regular P.E. class. Or, the student may receive direct instruction from the adapted P.E. teacher in a separate class that allows him/her to achieve success with physical activities in a safe environment.



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