

Position Paper

Highly Qualified Adapted Physical Education Teachers

Presented by the Adapted Physical Activity Council

of the

American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation

and

**the National Consortium for Physical Education and Recreation for
Individuals with Disabilities (NCPERID)**

Editors

Rebecca Lytle
John Miller

Michelle Grenier
Martin Block

Contributors

Tim Davis
Barry Lavay
Lauren Lieberman
Christopher Lienert
Elaine McHugh
Linda Rhen
Terry Rizzo

Carol Ryan
Claudine Sherrill
Louisa Summers
April Tripp
Garth Tymeson
Joe Winnick

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1900 Association Drive
Reston, VA 20191
www.aapar.org

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INTRODUCTION

Physical education services, specially designed if necessary, must be made available to all students with disabilities who qualify for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004). Highly qualified and caring personnel who hold a valid license to teach physical education must provide these physical education services. In the event that a student with a disability has unique physical education needs, and adapted or specially designed physical education is written into the student's individual education program (IEP), it is recommended that an adapted physical education specialist provide this service and/or provide consultative support to the general physical education teacher. To these ends, this position paper by the Adapted Physical Activity Council (APAC) and the National Consortium for Physical Education and Recreation for Individuals with Disabilities (NCPERID) provides interpretation, application, and criteria for "highly qualified" personnel who teach adapted or specially designed physical education (a required direct instructional service) to students with disabilities.

RATIONALE

According to IDEIA, a "highly qualified" special education teacher must meet the following criteria:

1. The teacher has obtained full state certification as a special education teacher, or passed the state special education licensing examination, and holds a license to teach in the state as a special education teacher.
2. The teacher has not had special education certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis.
3. The teacher holds at least a bachelor's degree. [(Part A – General Provisions) (602)(10)(B)]

Furthermore, IDEIA states: "The state educational agency has established and maintains qualifications to ensure that personnel necessary to carry out this part are appropriately and adequately prepared, and that those personnel have the content knowledge and skills to serve students with disabilities" [(Part B-State Eligibility)(612)(14)(A)].

RELATED RESEARCH

Based on the above requirements for special education teachers, APAC and NCPERID recommend that all teachers who are specifically hired to provide physical education services to students with disabilities, as prescribed on the Individual Education Plan (IEP) (a required special education direct instructional service), be licensed in the state to teach *physical* education and have additional content knowledge and skills in adapted physical education. Specific mandates have been set forth in IDEIA that are intended to ensure that all students are taught by instructors who are prepared and have content knowledge in the area for which they are hired. IDEIA, APAC, and NCPERID recognize the importance of physical activity for all students and its contribution to physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Physical education is defined in IDEIA as:



- Physical and motor fitness
- Fundamental motor skills and patterns
- Health related physical fitness
- Skills in aquatics, dance, and individual and group games and sports

Further, *all* students being served in special education *must* have physical education to the same extent that their peers without disabilities participate in physical education. According to the guidelines set forth in the Federal Register (34 CFR parts 300-301), “First, physical education must be made available equally to children with disabilities and children without disabilities.” ... “Second, if physical education is specially designed to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability and is set out in that child’s IEP, those services must be provided whether or not they are provided to other children in the agency.” For example, if a school offers physical education only through grade 10, a specially designed physical education program must be made available to a 12th-grade child with a disability, if such services are specified in her IEP.

Based on the needs of the student with disabilities, a continuum of physical education placement services are provided, ranging in delivery from a general physical education class to a specially designed adapted physical education class that may include one-on-one programming. The IDEIA mandates that “highly qualified” professionals teach *all* students; however, each state is responsible for determining who is highly qualified to provide physical education to children with disabilities. In many states a highly qualified person is someone who is licensed to teach general physical education, while in a few states, a highly qualified person may need extra training and even a specialized endorsement in adapted physical education. Several states have separate licenses for teaching adapted physical education. APAC and NCPERID recommend that physical education for students with disabilities be taught by highly qualified professionals licensed to teach physical education in their state and/or have received extra professional development or licensure in adapted physical education.

At a minimum, “highly qualified” *adapted* physical education teachers must have the same knowledge and skills—as defined by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, 2007)—as highly qualified *general* physical education teachers.

Moreover, highly qualified adapted physical education teachers must possess a comprehensive content knowledge in disability studies; assessment methods for service qualification and instructional design; report writing; special education law; development of individualized education programs (IEP); adaptations and modification for physical education; behavior management; individual teaching and learning styles; collaboration and consultation skills; advocacy, inclusion practices; instructional design and planning; community and family resources; professional leadership; and assistive technology for physical education (Kelly, 2006).

In order to ensure that all professionals who teach adapted or specially designed physical education to students with disabilities are in fact highly qualified, and meet all competencies stated above, APAC and NCPERID have identified the following minimum requirements for *all* adapted physical education professionals who would be considered “highly qualified.”



RECOMMENDATIONS

Criteria for Highly Qualified Adapted Physical Education Teachers

Criteria 1: Bachelor's degree in physical education teacher education and state license to teach physical education.

Professionals who teach physical education have content knowledge in this instructional area and hold a valid physical education teaching credential. Professionals with special education credentials are *not* qualified to serve as adapted physical educators unless they have completed the necessary additional professional preparation to be deemed “highly qualified” to teach physical education (see guidelines for a highly qualified physical educator NASPE document) and have met the requirements as stated in this document defining a “highly qualified” adapted physical education teacher.

Criteria 2: Twelve semester hours specifically addressing the educational needs of students with disabilities, with a minimum of nine semester hours specific to adapted physical education.

Coursework to meet this requirement must relate to physical activity and students with disabilities as set forth by state or national standards for professional preparation in adapted physical education. APAC and NCPERID believe that coursework in adapted physical education should provide evidence of competency in the following areas:

- a. Disability studies
- b. Motor assessment of individuals with disabilities
- c. Report writing
- d. Special education law
- e. Development of individualized education programs (IEP)
- f. Adaptations and modifications for physical education
- g. Behavior management
- h. Collaboration and consultation skills
- i. Advocacy skills
- j. Instructional design and planning
- k. Individual teaching and learning styles
- l. Inclusion practices
- m. Community and family resources
- n. Professional leadership
- o. Assistive technology for physical education

Criteria 3: Minimum of 150 hours practicum experience.

Practicum hours must be in physical education settings teaching students with disabilities. All practicum settings must be supervised by a certified physical educator and may include student teaching, disability sports programs, university supervised physical activity clinics/programs for individuals with disabilities, physical activity based summer camps and/or recreational programs. However, a minimum of 50 hours must be completed within a PK-12 school physical education setting. Practicum hours must be done with preschool, elementary, and high school-age students



who have a variety of different disabilities in a variety of settings (e.g., inclusion, individual, small group) as well as having the opportunity to participate in the IEP process.

Criteria 4: Professional preparation programs must be based on Standards for Adapted Physical Education.

When available, content for professional preparation programs in adapted physical education should follow the guidelines and standards set forth by each state credentialing agency. In the absence of such state credentialing guidelines for adapted physical education teacher preparation programs, institutions should follow the guidelines for content knowledge described in the Adapted Physical Education National Standards (Kelly, 2006). Furthermore, APAC and NCPERID recommend and encourage any state that does not currently have licensure in adapted physical education to develop comprehensive standards and training programs. This is to ensure that all students in adapted physical education have an opportunity to receive the highest quality physical education from highly qualified professionals.

References & Resources

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National Consortium for Physical Education and Recreation for Individuals with Disabilities www.ncperid.org/. Includes a list of accredited universities that offer professional preparation programs in adapted physical education.

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