

**Position Paper on  
Physical Education Content Standards  
for Students with a Disability**

The Physical Education Model Content Standards for California Public Schools were approved by the California State Board of Education on January 12, 2005. "The model content standards provide guidance for developing physical education programs by identifying what California students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Students in every school should be able to achieve these standards with adequate instruction and sustained effort. Some students with special needs may require appropriate accommodations, adaptations, and modifications to meet these standards. Local flexibility is maintained with these standards. Decisions about how best to teach the standards are left to teachers, schools, and local education agencies." (Physical Education Model Content Standards for California Public Schools, 2005). The intent of this position paper is to provide suggestions related to implementing standards-based physical education instruction for students with a disability.

As specified in federal law, individuals with a disability shall be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with non-disabled peers and shall have equal access to education, facilities, and services. (IDEIA, Section 612 (a) (5) (A) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 1973) Needed accommodations and/or modifications should be specified in the student's Individual Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan. Instruction, materials, support, and/or assessment/evaluation may be adapted while the standard is not.

Many students with a disability will require adaptations which include accommodations or modifications to enhance their learning. An accommodation will address the needs of the student by removing the effects of the disability but will not alter the performance outcome (e.g., more time, smaller groups, and instructional prompts). A modification is also based upon the needs of the student but it fundamentally alters or lowers the generally expected performance outcome (i.e., plays "one-on-one" hockey instead of team game, steps over stationary rope instead of jumping self-turned rope, or student drops ball into a container instead of throwing with accuracy). Educators should use caution when selecting to modify physical education performance outcomes for standards as the course content may be changed. All educators are strongly encouraged to refer to the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan when adapting a standards-based physical education curriculum for a student with a disability.

- **Course Considerations for Diploma-Bound Students**

The graduation requirements of a school district specifies the number of credits a student must earn in the different curricular areas, including physical education, for the attainment of a high school diploma. There are instances when the nature of the disability is such that modifications, as specified in the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan, are needed. In these instances, the "local flexibility" afforded school districts when implementing a standards-based physical education program can be used to designate that the high school physical education requirements can be met with a modified program that is provided in general physical education, specially-designed physical education, and/or adapted physical education. (Please refer to the *Adapted Physical Education Guidelines for California Schools*, 2003, for a description of service delivery models.)

The Physical Education Model Content Standards identify five overarching standards for grades K-8 and three overarching standards for high school. *The Adapted Physical Education Guidelines for California Schools*, approved by the California Department of Education in 2003, identifies eight standards for individuals with a disability along with supporting standards/benchmarks for every grade level, including pre-school. These eight Adapted Physical Education (APE) standards were based upon the National Association for Sport and Physical Education Standards and the California Challenge Standards as California did not have physical education standards. The eight APE standards, although worded somewhat differently, can be aligned with both the five elementary and three high school overarching Physical Education Model Content Standards. The alignment of the standards is depicted in the chart at the end of this position paper. While stated with teacher and student language, the Adapted Physical Education standards can assist in identifying accommodations and modifications that will enable a student with a severe disability reach an identified level of achievement. For some students with a severe disability, partial participation may be the method by which access to grade level standards is attained.

Scaffolding is often needed to teach a standard to a student with a disability. This differentiated instruction will enable the student to progress in the physical education curriculum through the use of unique instructional strategies, supports/prompts, and sequences. Sometimes, students will need to be taught skills that are prerequisite to those identified in a particular standard. In some instances, these skills will be found in a lower grade-level standard or may be a fundamental movement pattern. Additionally, adapted equipment (which can be considered assistive technology) can often be used to make accommodations in physical education that will enable the student to meet the performance outcome identified for the physical education standards, as well as IEP goals and objectives.

Grade level standards should not be equated with developmental level. For students whose developmental level is below their grade level, only teaching the standards from a grade level that is commensurate with the student's developmental level will result in a "reduced" curriculum. Once a standard is identified, the educator must: 1) determine how proficiency will be assessed; 2) select appropriate curricular materials; and 3) identify appropriate instructional strategies based upon student needs. Although standards-based instructional design includes assessment, this does not change the assessment methods or criterion for determining the need for adapted physical education. Eligibility, need for service, and the service delivery model are contained in the *Adapted Physical Education Guidelines for California Schools*, 2003.

Writing IEP goals and objectives that are standards-based goals is best practice. However, only working on the standards identified in the goals and objectives will not provide the student with access to the entire grade-level curriculum. To enable this access, a collaborative effort is needed among all educators providing the physical education instruction. Students with a disability can benefit from a standards-based physical education curriculum. When adaptations, which include accommodations and/or modifications, are used appropriately, these students can meet the California Physical Education Content Standards.

**Written by the Adapted Physical Education Guidelines for California Schools Committee  
Endorsed by The State Council on Adapted Physical Education (SCAPE)  
California Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (CAHPERD).**

**Alignment of the APE Guidelines Standards with  
the Physical Education Model Content Standards**

Grades K- 8 Standards	APE Guidelines Standards	High School Standards
<p>1. Demonstrate motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>2. Demonstrate knowledge of movement concepts, principles, and strategies as they apply to learning and performance of physical activities.</p>	<p>1. The student will be exposed to a variety of movement activities and will be competent within their maximum potential.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>2. The student will be introduced to movement concepts and principles in accordance with cognitive ability and will apply some of these while moving.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>4. The student will regularly experience recreation/leisure (and fitness) activities.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>6. The student will apply recreation/leisure (and fitness) skills to other life activities.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>8. The student will be introduced to a variety of multicultural movement activities.</p>	<p>1. Demonstrate knowledge and competency in motor skills, movement patterns, and strategies to perform a variety of physical activities.</p>
<p>3. Assess and maintain a level of physical fitness to improve health and performance.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>4. Demonstrate knowledge of physical fitness concepts, principles, and strategies to improve health and performance.</p>	<p>3. The student will achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of fitness.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>4. The student will regularly experience (recreation/leisure and) fitness activities.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>6. The student will apply (recreation/leisure and) fitness skills to other life activities.</p>	<p>2. Achieve a level of physical fitness for health and performance while demonstrating knowledge of fitness concepts, principles, and strategies.</p>
<p>5. Demonstrate and utilize knowledge of psychological and sociological concepts, principles, and strategies as they apply to learning and performance of physical activity.</p>	<p>5. The student will demonstrate appropriate personal behavior while participating in movement activities.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>7. The student will demonstrate appropriate interaction with others while participating in movement activities.</p>	<p>3. Demonstrate knowledge of psychological and sociological concepts, principles, and strategies as they apply to learning and performance of physical activity.</p>