OREGON CONTENT STANDARDS

Adapted Physical Education Frequently Asked Questions

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OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Table of Contents

Overview **2**

Frequently Asked Questions **2**

What are the legal requirements governing PE and APE? **2**

How does Adapted Physical Education (APE) provide access to inclusive education? **3**

What is the role of school and district administrators in supporting APE? **4**

What are Oregon's Physical Education Content Standards and how are they used in APE? **5**

How is it determined whether a student needs APE? **6**

How is the least restrictive environment determined? **7**

Who is qualified to provide Adapted PE? **8**

Can Occupational Therapists (OTs) or Physical Therapists (PTs) provide APE? **8**

Can paraprofessionals provide APE? **8**

What if a district does not have an APE certified teacher? **8**

What is the difference between what a General PE teacher provides vs an APE teacher? **9**

Are General Physical Education Teachers allowed to provide APE? **9**

Why is it best practice for a school district to have a certified APE specialist? **9**

Does ODE provide any funding opportunities to hire APE teachers? **9**

Can students with disabilities automatically be exempt from PE? **9**

Can students receive an exemption from Physical Education? **10**

How can students be supported with extracurricular and non-academic activities? **10**

How can families be involved? **10**

Resources **11**

Overview

Physical education is an essential component of a well-rounded education and plays a critical role in the physical, cognitive, and social development of every student. Adapted Physical Education (APE) is specially designed instruction (SDI) in physical education modified so that it is as appropriate, meaningful, and challenging for a student with a disability as it is for a student without a disability. APE ensures that all students, ages 3–21, receive instruction designed to develop physical and motor fitness, fundamental movement skills, and participation in activities that promote lifelong health and wellness in Oregon Schools. All physical education (PE) instruction must align with the Oregon Physical Education Standards.

This document organizes frequently asked questions (FAQ) into broad categories to help districts easily find the information they need to provide Adapted PE, make personnel and hiring decisions, and communicate with families. The FAQ also provides suggested approaches, practices, and resources.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the legal requirements governing PE and APE?

This section outlines the legal and regulatory framework applicable to APE, including relevant legislation and compliance obligations. It identifies statutory requirements governing PE and APE to ensure that all activities are conducted in accordance with applicable national and state laws.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) IDEA; 34 CFR §300.108; Special Education 34 CFR §300.39) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (34 CFR Part 104, 45 CFR Part 84), school districts are responsible for ensuring that students with disabilities have equal access to **physical education (PE)** as part of their **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):**

- IDEA requires that physical education services, specially designed, if necessary, are available to every child with a disability receiving FAPE.
- Special education is defined as specially designed instruction provided at no cost to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction in physical education.

In Oregon, Oregon Administrative Rule OAR 581-015-2000 defines Special Education and OAR 581-015-2200 outlines the content of an Individual Education Plan (IEP):

- All students with disabilities must have access to physical education.
- If a student cannot access general physical education without support, Adapted Physical Education is provided as specially designed instruction (SDI).
- Services must be individualized, IEP-driven, and delivered by appropriately licensed PE staff (ideally APE teachers).
- Special education means specially designed instruction that is provided at no cost to parents to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.
- Adapted PE means instruction in **physical education** and other supports necessary to meet the students' needs.

Under Oregon Revised Statutes ORS.329.496, (Section 4: A-B) (4)(a) Notwithstanding subsections (1) and (3) of this section, a student with disabilities shall have suitably adapted physical education incorporated as part of the individualized education program developed for the student under ORS 343.151

> (b) Notwithstanding subsections (1) and (3) of this section, a student who does not have an individualized education program but has chronic health problems, other disabling conditions or other special needs that preclude the student from participating in regular physical education instruction shall have suitably **adapted physical education incorporated as part of an individualized health plan developed for the student by the school district or public charter school.**

Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR 581-022-2263) requires public school students in kindergarten through grade 8 to participate in physical education for at least 150 minutes per school week, or 120 minutes in schools operating an average four-day week. For grades 6-8, the required minutes may be calculated as a weekly average over the school year, except that sixth-grade students attending a K-6 school must participate for the entire school year. These requirements apply to all students, including students with disabilities. Receiving APE, related services, or other special education services does not replace physical education or reduce a student's required access to it. Schools should schedule APE and other supports so that students receive the required physical education instructional time and the services identified in their IEPs.

How does Adapted Physical Education (APE) provide access to inclusive education?

Adapted Physical Education (APE) is specially designed physical education instruction for a student with a disability whose individual needs cannot be adequately addressed through the general physical education program alone. APE supports access to required physical education by adapting instruction, activities, equipment, assessments, or the learning environment based on the student's needs and Individualized Education Program, or IEP.

APE works to:

- **Provide equitable access to physical education.** Equity means identifying and removing barriers so that each student has the instruction, supports, and resources needed to participate and make progress. This does not always mean that every student uses the same equipment or completes an activity in the same way.
    - **Example:** During a basketball unit, a student might use a lighter ball, receive additional practice time, or use visual cues so they can work toward the lesson's learning goals alongside their peers.
- **Deliver specially designed instruction.** APE adapts the content, teaching methods, equipment, environment, or assessment of physical education to address a student's disability-related needs. These adaptations should be individualized and documented through the IEP process.
    - **Example:** During a volleyball unit, a student might receive visual demonstrations, shorter skill sequences, repeated structured practice, and individualized feedback connected to the student's IEP goals.
- **Support meaningful participation with peers.** Students with disabilities should participate with nondisabled peers as much as possible. Inclusion is meaningful when students are working toward relevant physical education standards and goals, are actively engaged in instruction, and have the supports needed to participate safely and successfully.
    - **Example:** During a soccer lesson, a student may participate in the general physical education class with adapted equipment, modified rules, communication supports, or assistance from trained staff rather than sitting out or completing an unrelated activity.
- **Build the staffing and systems needed for access.** Districts and schools are responsible for ensuring that scheduling, staffing, professional learning, equipment, facilities, and collaboration support the services identified in students' IEPs. Schools should also review participation, scheduling, and service-delivery data to identify patterns of missed instructional time or unequal access.
    - **Example:** If a district finds that students receiving APE regularly miss required physical education because of scheduling conflicts, the district revises schedules and service-delivery practice so students receive the instruction identified in their IEPs.

What is the role of school and district administrators in supporting APE?

District and school administrators share responsibility for ensuring that students with disabilities receive equitable access to physical education, including Adapted Physical Education when identified through the evaluation and IEP process. District administrators establish and monitor the systems needed to provide APE, while school administrators support consistent implementation for individual students.

District administrators are responsible for the policies, staffing, resources, and oversight needed to provide compliant and effective physical education services. Responsibilities include:

- Aligning district policies and procedures with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504, ORS 329.496, and OAR 581-022-2263.
- Establishing consistent procedures for referral, evaluation, eligibility, IEP development, service delivery, and progress monitoring when a student may need specially designed physical education.
- Allocating qualified personnel, instructional materials, adapted equipment, facilities, and scheduling resources needed to provide APE and support inclusive physical education.
- Providing ongoing professional learning for physical educators, special educators, administrators, paraeducators, and other staff involved in supporting students during physical education.
- Monitoring districtwide implementation, including whether students receive required physical education instructional time and the services identified in their IEPs.
- Reviewing data to identify and address access gaps, such as missed instructional time, inconsistent referrals, scheduling conflicts, or differences in service availability among schools.

School administrators are responsible for creating the conditions needed for staff to implement students' physical education and APE services consistently. Responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that APE and related physical education services documented in a student's IEP are scheduled and delivered as written.
- Supporting collaboration among physical educators, APE specialists, special educators, related service providers, paraeducators, and families.
- Providing staff with access to students' relevant IEP information, including goals, accommodations, modifications, services, and safety or accessibility needs.
- Ensuring students can participate meaningfully in physical education with the appropriate instruction, equipment, supports, and accessible learning environments.
- Protecting instructional time by avoiding scheduling conflicts that cause students to miss physical education or APE services.
- Supporting progress monitoring and family communication in accordance with each student's IEP.
- Identifying implementation barriers and working with district leaders to resolve them, including staffing shortages, insufficient equipment, inaccessible facilities, or gaps in staff training.

What are Oregon's Physical Education Content Standards and how are they used in APE?

Oregon's Physical Education Content Standards describe what students should know and be able to do in physical education by the end of four grade bands: K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12. Adopted in June 2025 and based on SHAPE America's 2024 National Physical Education Standards, they provide a common foundation for physical education instruction, curriculum, and assessment across Oregon.

The standards are organized into four domains:

1. **Develops a variety of motor skills (DMS):** Students develop movement skills used in physical activity, recreation, fitness, dance, games, sports, and everyday life.
2. **Applies knowledge related to movement and fitness concepts (AMF):** Students learn to apply movement concepts, strategies, fitness principles, safety practices, and knowledge that supports physical well-being.
3. **Develops social skills through movement (SSM):** Students practice communication, cooperation, empathy, respect, leadership, cultural awareness, conflict resolution, and safe participation.
4. **Develops personal skills, identifies personal benefits of movement, and chooses to engage in physical activity (PSB):** Students develop agency through goal setting, reflection, self-management, personal choice, and participation in meaningful physical activity.

Oregon's Transformative Social and Emotional Learning Standards are explicitly incorporated into Domains 3 and 4 and should inform instruction across all four domains.

Applying the standards in Adapted Physical Education

Students receiving Adapted Physical Education remain part of Oregon's standards-based physical education system. The standards help educators identify meaningful learning priorities, while specially designed instruction, accommodations, modifications, and supports provide an appropriate way for each student to access instruction and demonstrate progress.

In APE, educators may:

- **Use assessment information to identify barriers** related to motor performance, communication, cognition, behavior, sensory processing, mobility, or other disability-related needs.
- **Adapt instruction, activities, equipment, rules, environments, pacing, or methods of response** without unnecessarily changing the intended learning goal.
- **Develop measurable IEP goals when needed** to address disability-related skills that affect the student's access to and progress in physical education.
- **Monitor and report progress** using assessment methods appropriate to the student and the skills being taught.

How is it determined whether a student needs APE?

A parent, guardian, or teacher may request an initial evaluation when there is reason to suspect that a student may need Adapted Physical Education (APE). A referral for an APE evaluation is appropriate when a member of the student's IEP team suspects that the student's disability-related needs are affecting their participation or progress in physical education.

The determination of whether APE is needed is based on a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a qualified physical education specialist. The evaluation typically includes a valid and reliable gross motor assessment, observations of the student's performance in physical education, and other relevant information. Although input from the student's parents or guardians and general physical education teacher is not required, it can provide valuable context for the evaluation.

Service Delivery and IEP Alignment

When the student's IEP team determines that APE is appropriate, the IEP must document the student's present levels of performance, measurable goals, accommodations or modifications, and the frequency, duration, location, and setting of services. These components guide the delivery of specially designed instruction in the least restrictive environment and provide the basis for measuring and reporting the student's progress.

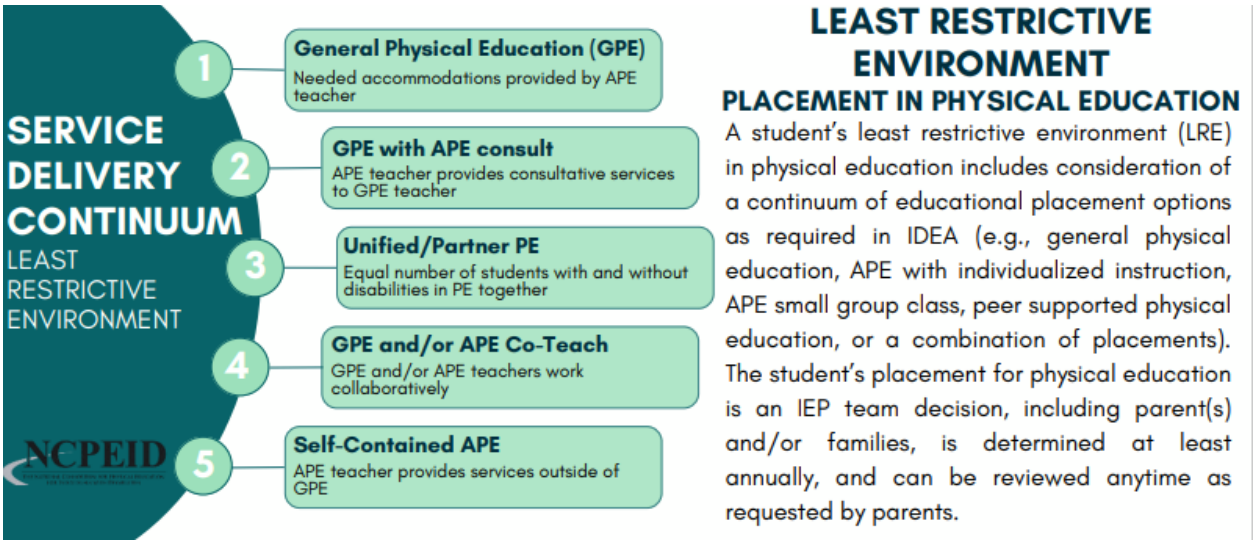
The APE evaluation informs these decisions by identifying the student's strengths and disability-related needs across the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains. The IEP team uses the evaluation results to determine the appropriate services, supports, placement, and methods for monitoring progress.

How is the least restrictive environment determined?

Adapted Physical Education (APE) is a service, not a placement. The IEP team determines the least restrictive environment based on the individual student's needs. The team must begin by considering participation in general physical education with nondisabled peers, using appropriate supports, before considering more restrictive options.

General physical education should incorporate inclusive practices and multiple access points so that students can participate and succeed to the greatest extent appropriate. However, service-delivery decisions must be individualized and based on the environment, instruction, and supports that best meet the student's needs.

The graphic below, developed by the National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities (NCPEID), presents APE service-delivery options ranging from support in general physical education to small-group, individualized, or community-based instruction. The IEP team uses evaluation data to determine the setting and supports that meet the student's needs while maximizing participation with nondisabled peers.



Graphic provided by NCPEID

Who is qualified to provide Adapted PE?

Adapted Physical Education (APE) must be delivered by a licensed physical educator with the appropriate endorsement who meets the requirements established by the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC). Although Oregon does not require a specific APE specialization, specialized training or certification, such as the Certified Adapted Physical Educator (CAPE) credential, is considered best practice.

Physical educators play a significant role in ensuring student safety during gross motor activities, particularly for students with disabilities who may have additional medical or health-related needs. Without specialized training in APE, general physical educators may be less prepared to recognize and appropriately respond to disability-related medical or safety needs during physical activity.

Can Occupational Therapists (OTs) or Physical Therapists (PTs) provide APE?

No. APE is specially designed instruction in a core academic area and must be delivered by a licensed and endorsed physical educator. OT and PT are related services and do not replace APE instruction.

Can paraprofessionals provide APE?

No. A paraprofessional may support APE instruction but cannot independently deliver APE.

What if a district does not have an APE certified teacher?

When hiring an endorsed Adapted Physical Education (APE) teacher is not feasible, districts are strongly encouraged to designate a licensed physical education teacher for this role and ensure the individual receives adequate training, professional consultation, and targeted professional development to build the necessary APE competencies.

What is the difference between what a General PE teacher provides vs an APE teacher?

General PE teachers serve students who can participate in standard PE activities with typical instruction and rules. General PE teachers are not responsible for qualifying a student for special education services via assessment or writing or monitoring IEP goals.

APE teachers serve students who qualify for APE under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). APE teachers provide individualized instruction based on IEP goals. APE teachers are usually part of the special education team, write and implement IEP goals, conduct formal APE evaluations and monitor and report IEP progress.

Are General Physical Education Teachers allowed to provide APE?

Yes, General PE teachers can provide a certain level of adapted physical education; however, it is best practice to have an APE teacher with specialized training. General PE teachers may provide simple modifications for students but not necessarily individualized modifications for students who may need more specialized support.

Why is it best practice for a school district to have a certified APE specialist?

It is best practice for school districts to use certified APE specialists because they have specialized training to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. Their expertise ensures instruction is safe, individualized, and aligned with each student's IEP, promoting skill development, inclusion and confidence. APE specialists also reduce injury risk by adapting activities and environments, resulting in higher quality instruction and better student outcomes.

Does ODE provide any funding opportunities to hire APE teachers?

Yes. To support implementation of inclusive Physical Education across the state, the Oregon Legislature established the Physical Education Expansion K–8 (PEEK-8) grant program under ORS 329.501. Each biennium ODE receives funds from the legislature to provide partial funding to districts for hiring and training licensed PE teachers, which include APE teachers. The grants are called the Physical Education Expansion K-8 (PEEK-8) grants. Grant availability, timelines, and requirements may vary by biennium.

Can students with disabilities automatically be exempt from PE?

No. Federal and state laws prohibit discrimination and require physical education to be included in a student's educational program. These include IDEA, FAPE, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). The focus should be on determining which physical education program, services, and supports are appropriate for the student's disability-related needs.

Can students receive an exemption from Physical Education?

Yes, OAR 581-021-0009 allows a parent or guardian to request an exemption from an academic content area based on a student's disability or religious beliefs.

The parent or guardian must explain the reason for the request and propose an individualized alternative learning activity for the period of the exemption. The alternative activity must address the goals of the activity or course from which the student would be exempt, including instruction in the applicable content standards.

Each school district must decide whether to grant approval for the exemption. An evaluation of the request and approval by appropriate school district personnel must be identified. Any alternative learning experience approved as part of the exemption must be consistent with the student's educational progress and career goals, as described in OAR 581-022-2270 and OAR 581-022-2060).

Upon approval by the district school board and completion of the alternative learning activity, the student may be granted credit. For a student with a disability, an exemption should be considered only after appropriate supports, accommodations, modifications, and APE service options have been explored.

How can students be supported with extracurricular and non-academic activities?

Under OAR 581-015-2070, OAR 581-015-2255, OAR 581-015-2000, and 34 CFR §300.107, districts must provide students with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities, including athletics, recreation, clubs, transportation, and other school-sponsored activities. The student's IEP team determines the supplementary aids and services that are appropriate and necessary for participation.

When appropriate, APE staff may collaborate with coaches and other school staff to support safe and meaningful participation in school-sponsored physical activities and sports. Supports may include accommodations, modifications, adapted equipment, staff consultation, or training. These supports should enable the student to participate with peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's individual needs.

How can families be involved?

Families are essential partners in ensuring children receive appropriate PE services. IDEA and Section 504 guarantee parents the right to participate in all decisions regarding APE. Families:

- Have the right to be informed, involved, and empowered to ensure their child fully participates in physical education and physical activity opportunities at school
- Be included in the IEP process, receive regular updates on progress, and expect equal opportunities for their children to participate in all physical education and extracurricular programs

Resources

Regional Supports

- **Oregon Department of Education (ODE) – Special Education Services**
- **Oregon Department of Education (ODE) – Physical Education**
- SHAPE AMERICA – 10 Super Simple Equipment Modifications to Support Your Students in PE
- ODE/OSHAPE Slide Deck Presentation: Physical Education for All Students
- Oregon Association of **Education Service Districts (OAESDs)**
- **Oregon Adapted PE Consortium**
- **Oregon SHAPE**
- **ODE Guidance: Educational Placements, SDI, and LRE Considerations**

Federal Regulations and Law

- **34 CFR §300.39 – Special Education Definition**
- **IDEA 2004 – (34 CFR§300.108)**
- **20 U.S. Code §1401 – Definition of Special Education**

Oregon Administrative Rules

- **OAR Division 15 2000 Definitions – Special Education**
- **OAR 581-015-2070 – Nonacademic and Extracurricular Services**
  Statutory/Other Authority: ORS 343.041, 343.045 & 343.055
  Statutes/Other Implemented: ORS 343.045 & 34 CFR 300.107

National Resources

- **NCPEID – National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities**
  - **OSEP**
  - **NCPEID Guidance Doc for Administrators (2).pdf**
- **NCPEID - National APE Certification (CAPE)**
- **OCR – U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights**
- SHAPE America – Adapted Physical Education Resource Manual
- SHAPE America – Eligibility Criteria for Adapted Physical Education Services Position Paper

U.S. Department of Education Policy Letters

- **Provision of PE for preschool students with disabilities:** July 31st 2013
- **Providing PE for all students when PE is not generally offered:** October 23rd 2013

- **Personnel qualifications and licensure for APE:** May 12th 2021
- **Ensuring the maximum appropriate PE to meet the child's needs:** April 7th 2022
- **Evaluation requirements and provision of physical education:** July 30th 2024