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MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services
IMPLEMENTATION BEST PRACTICES & CONSIDERATIONS

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TIPs for Adapted Physical Education in a Virtual Environment

This document is intended to highlight physical education as a critical part of a well-rounded education and an essential learning opportunity for Maryland's young people as they heal, re-socialize, and adapt to new learning environments. This document asserts students' rights, regardless of ability or disability, to a well-rounded education and highlights the critical and unique values physical education offers: providing students with opportunities to learn motor skills and gain an understanding of the importance of physical activity.

The intention through these guidelines is to provide key decision-makers with adequate information to strengthen every school's ability to provide meaningful, safe, culturally responsive, pedagogically appropriate, standards-based physical education (PE) and/or adapted physical education (APE).

These suggestions were developed in collaboration with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Early Intervention/Special Education Services (DEI/SES), the Maryland Adapted Physical Education Steering Committee, the Maryland Adapted Physical Education Consortium (MAPEC), and the Society of Health and Physical Educators Maryland (SHAPE Maryland). They are designed to support current best practices for physical education and are based upon the most up-to-date information available at the time.

The chart below identifies some of the challenges or barriers educators may face when designing, implementing, and evaluating a specially designed physical education service for a student with a disability, commonly referred to as Adapted Physical Education. These suggestions are designed to help mitigate or remove those barrier or challenges. These recommendations are not all inclusive and are intended to help teachers and local school system (LSS) leaders restore, reconstruct, and redesign education. The central focus remains the [physical education standards](#): with the right resources and some creativity, specially designed physical education instruction can be achieved remotely or in a hybrid environment.

Challenges	Suggestions
<p>Realigning IEPs to reflect the virtual learning environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign more home-based fitness activities/goals and simplify motor skills - throwing, catching, kicking, etc. • Meet the child where they are with a centralized focus on lifelong community-based activities • Design activities to include skills that can be safely performed in the student’s home and with equipment that is readily available to them
<p>Administering APE assessments (initial and re-evaluations) to satisfy IEP requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following local protocol(s), invite the parent/guardian to bring their student in for a one-on-one assessment • Offer the parent/guardian the option to delay testing until they are comfortable with an in-person assessment: be sure to document this option • Offer the parent/guardian the option of completing the assessment remotely – given a checklist in advance
<p>Ensuring students have a safe place to participate and/or the appropriate equipment to learn new skills and concepts at home</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey parents about what equipment students may have at home. • Plan on using alternative equipment and/or modified activities for the home • Have families create their own kit of At-Home Equipment. • Set aside a small set of equipment for students or guardians to pick-up from school and bring home for a short period of time
<p>Teaching visually impaired students in a virtual environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to use communication devices during service hours • Consult with assistive technology staff and teachers of the visually impaired to provide supports and modifications to access the physical education lessons
<p>Teaching non-verbal students in a virtual environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use lots of visuals, videos, and parent/guardian support during service hours • Continue to use communication devices during service hours • Consult with assistive technology staff and teachers to provide supports and modifications to access the physical education lessons • Use accessible videos and or pictures with embedded sign language symbols or picture symbols that are used by the student for communication in all subject areas

Challenges	Suggestions
Students not having access to technology for synchronous instruction (computer and/or reliable Wi-Fi)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with assistive technology staff to ensure students have access to the necessary technology • Use virtual support from a student’s paraprofessional to assist with completing written assignment(s) • Create modified assignments that students can complete in a different format, such as an emailed cell phone video recording or a paper packet • Conference with related service providers and special education staff to design activities that students can complete independently and safely in their home environment asynchronously
Inconsistencies in schedules (multiple transitions from synchronous to asynchronous instructional models as well as face-to-face to virtual and/or a hybrid instruction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a routine and lesson plan that can be implemented in-person, in a hybrid model, and virtually to meet all students needs as the service delivery model shifts • Collaborate with classroom teachers and paraprofessionals to provide continuity from classroom to Physical Education
Student engagement and expectations during virtual learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camera use (consult LSS policy) • Discuss with parent/guardian about the school system’s expectations of camera use during virtual PE lessons • Adult assistance - Virtual PE & Dance Recommendations for Families • IEP team meeting to realign expectations to allow for a successful educational experience for students • Option for asynchronous lesson when support is available • Reassign students to a general PE class and continue to provide supports and modifications as necessary

Collaborative Opportunities with Other Disciplines

- Work with STEM instructors and students to design and build APE equipment
- Co-led sessions with other related service providers, for example Occupational Therapy and APE sessions use the fine motor skills of making a paper ball and throwing a paper ball for APE skills
- Suggest activities that can be completed in the community (parks, open spaces)
- Connect with related services providers to design activities/lessons (such as wellness walking in collaboration with teachers of the visually impaired for safety for crossing the street safely)

Collaboration with Secondary Transition

[Fit4Work](#) has a focus on lifetime wellness and fitness. Example: use the household task of raking leaves but the real focus for APE is to build core strength.

Silver Lining

- Teachers are communicating regularly with parents to support students with disabilities; they are providing lessons/modifications ahead of time, asking about what works and what does not work.
- Adapted PE teachers are meeting with general education and special education teachers on a regular basis to share ideas and ask questions (Google Meet makes it easy!).
- When Adapted PE services are provided virtually, the PE teachers have time to work directly with the student, rather than relying on the teaching assistant to do it during in-person class.
- PE teachers are creating great modifications to content-specific “writing” assignments through Google slides and/or Google Docs and sharing their work with others.
- Staff, students, and parents are becoming much more tech-savvy.

Resources

Some of the instructional ideas/resources referenced in these tips allow for a more even instructional environment for all of our students. The staff that are not “yoga people” for example, are able to pull yoga videos that other staff have created to use that instructional modality, and content, with their students. This “team/collaborative” teaching approach will continue when students return to brick and mortar.

Additional Resources

- U.S. Department of Education: [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) - Physical Education](#)
- Maryland State Department of Education: [Maryland COMAR Regulation \(13A.04.13\) Physical Education Instructional Program for PreK-12](#)
- Disability Rights Maryland: [Fitness and Athletic Equity Law for Students with Disabilities 7-4B-02](#)
- Maryland State Department of Education: [Maryland Physical Education Framework Pre-Kindergarten through 12th Grade \(2020\)](#)
- Maryland State Department of Education: [A Guide for Serving Students with Disabilities in Physical Education](#)
- SHAPE America: [School Reentry Resources](#)
- Prince George’s County Public Schools: [Adapted Physical Education](#)



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