



Active Schools

***Inclusive Physical Education
and Physical Activity***

***Meeting the Needs of Students
with Disabilities***

Survey Report

in collaboration with



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Background

In 2013, [Let's Move! Active Schools](#) was launched as part of former First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* initiative. Founded on the premise that we are all designed to move, the effort strives to create positive experiences for children by integrating at least 60 minutes a day of physical activity into the school environment. Today, now Active Schools, is the national solution aimed at increasing physical education and physical activity in K-12 schools, ultimately giving children the opportunity to reach their greatest potential both in the classroom and in life. The initiative has enrolled over 35,000 champions affiliated with 22,000 schools.

In April 2016, Lakeshore Foundation – National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD) joined Active Schools as a new partner along with over 30 other leading health, education and private sector organizations as part of the Active Schools national collaborative to support activities focused on inclusive physical education and physical activity environments.

Active Schools is a national movement to ensure that 60 minutes of physical activity is the norm in K-12 schools across the country. Active Schools serves as a hub to help schools access best practices, programs, and resources to increase physical education and physical activity opportunities for all students. Why are Active Schools so important? Because Active Kids Do Better. Physical activity not only helps kids stay healthy and strong, but it can also contribute to higher test scores, improved attendance, better behavior in class, enhanced leadership skills and a lifetime of healthy habits.

Lakeshore Foundation – National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD)

Lakeshore Foundation's activity, research and advocacy initiatives annually serve thousands of children and adults with physical disabilities and chronic health conditions. Located in Birmingham, Alabama Lakeshore's mission is based on the fact that physical activity is essential for individuals with physical disabilities to lead healthy, active and independent lives. Lakeshore's adapted recreation, sport, fitness and aquatics programs serve people locally, nationally and internationally. Lakeshore is home to the CDC-funded National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD). Founded in 1999, NCHPAD is a public health practice and resource center on health promotion for people with disability. NCHPAD works to create health equity for people with disability by providing individualized information, referral and consultation services to people with disability, families, caregivers, policymakers, community members, health care practitioners and public health professionals through an array of web-based materials and health communication endeavors. NCHPAD features a variety of resources and services, which can benefit all ages and populations that can be found online at www.nchpad.org.



Executive Summary

Obesity rates for children ages 2-17 with disabilities are 38% higher than for children without a disability. Moreover, children with developmental disabilities and mobility limitations may be more susceptible to obesity related risk factors (i.e., nutrition and physical activity) compared to individuals without disabilities. Despite the significance, there is limited research examining the current practices and needs of physical education (PE) teachers in effectively implementing inclusive physical education and activity programs. A ***Survey of Providing Inclusive Physical Education and Physical Activity and Meeting the Needs of Students with Disabilities*** was sent to Active Schools' champions who identified themselves as a PE teacher. The purpose of this needs assessment was to identify current practices and needs to providing inclusive PE among teachers. The survey addressed participation levels, class strategies, after school programs, certifications, support, teacher preparation , and the built environment. A total of 742 PE teachers participated in the survey. Results from the survey indicate a lack of support for professional development on working with students with disabilities, limited knowledge and/or no resources available to provide inclusive PE programs and limited input into student's individual education plans (IEP). Additionally , just over half of the PE teachers who responded to this survey reported making some adaptations and accommodations to facilities, rules, equipment instructions and assessment. Based on the results of this survey, there is a need for schools to provide funding and change policy and practice to enhance the capacity of PE teachers to improve inclusion and ultimately increase physical activity among youth with disabilities.



“All students with disabilities should be provided with support so they can participate with their peers in a general education setting as much as possible.”

-Survey Participant

Defining Terms

These definitions were provided for the purpose of answering the questions in this survey.

Disability -

The federal civil rights law (Section 504) defines an individual with a disability as any individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment.

General Physical Education Class -

A general physical education class is required for or offered to all students regardless of ability or disability.

Adapted Physical Education Class -

An adapted physical education class may be provided for a student with a disability, in addition to or instead of general physical education class, to address the individual needs of the student.

Adaptation -

An adaptation is a change to what a student is expected to learn and/or demonstrate based on his/her disability.

Accommodation -

An accommodation means making an adaptation in a manner that does not fundamentally change the target skill that is being taught and/or testing construct that is being measured.

Inclusion -

Inclusion assumes that all children, regardless of ability or disability, have the right to be respected and appreciated as valuable members of the school community, fully participate in all school activities, and interact with peers of all ability levels with opportunities to develop friendships differences and learn and respect.⁴

The Issue



**SURVEY
SAYS...**

Participation

The survey asked about student's participation in physical education class.

- 43% of students with a disability → Participate in general PE class AND adapted PE class
- 24% of students with a disability → Participate only in an adapted PE class
- 80% of students with a disability → Participate only in a general PE class
- 12% of students with a disability → Do not participate in any type of PE class



12%

Of students with a disability do not participate in any type of physical education class.

“All of our students participate in regular physical education and I am responsible for meeting the needs of those with disabilities.”

“We are all inclusive, with adaptation for those in need.”

“They have an adapted PE teacher with them during class time. They do the same activities the other students do with some help and adjustment.”

“All 750+ students (30 classes) attend PE once a week for 45 minutes with me (the only physical educator).”

Class Adaptations

56%

of physical education teachers make rules adaptations often. To improve this, rules can be modified to allow the student to achieve the desired goal. If for instance, the students are to kick a ball into a net from 10 feet away, a student with a disability may need to get closer to be able to kick or throw the ball into the net. Time requirements and “outs” may be eliminated.

50%

of physical education teachers make instruction adaptations often. To improve this, physical education teachers may modify instructions by modeling what the student is expected to do. Instructions may be printed out in large print and hung up for the student to see during the time of the lesson. Oral prompts can be given.

54%

of physical education teachers make assessment adaptations often. In order to write a proper Individualized Education Plan (IEP), there must be an assessment process involved. This should include physical testing of motor performance, as well as verbal inquiry regarding background, disability awareness and the student’s personal goals.

47%

of physical education teachers make equipment adaptations often. To improve this, modifications to equipment may mean that bats or paddles have Velcro strapping so that a student with gross motor difficulties may hold it easier. Other adaptations may include lowering a basketball net, using larger or smaller balls or utilizing a tee to hold a ball. Students might use scoops for catching balls instead of their hands. Targets could be made larger and placed closer to students.

59%

of physical education teachers make facility and space adaptations often. To improve this, the environment in which students participate in must be safe, secure and welcoming. Padding, hand holds, and adaptive equipment should be readily available. The playing field must be clearly defined. The use of taped or painted areas makes it easier for the student to see boundaries. Create a safe place for the students and make sure the students know how to find it.

“I usually make adaptations to equipment or have to buy adaptive balls or equipment. You have to have money to buy this special equipment, so I have to seek money as needed.”

“We are not provided with the information that is on a students IEP to help make specific accommodation to students who would benefit from a

visual schedule versus verbal and demonstrative only communication."

"Students are often pre-taught in a small group setting."

"Accommodations and adaptations are followed as they are written in the 504 and IEP's."

"I make modifications on assessment for adapted students, but do not feel this is a strength and question myself as to whether I am assessing them correctly."



21%

of physical education teachers do not discuss adaptations with students.

52%

of physical education teachers use a peer system.

Peer tutoring is an appropriate and effective way to set up a meaningful class with the opportunity for higher rates of motor-appropriate learning. The simple implementation of a trained peer can improve the level of skill and learning for students with a disability. Besides its high success rate, peer tutoring is appealing because it is an inexpensive way to help students with disabilities succeed in the general physical education class.⁶



“The expectation is that the entire class works as a community. If a child needs support, any child, it is everyone’s responsibility, not just one individual. Instead of a peer buddy for one person, I have, for example, a 4th-grade teaching assistant working with a kindergarten class.”

Physical Education Teachers' Preparation

54%

of physical education teachers do not receive professional development sessions or materials on inclusive physical education from their district.

19%

of physical education teachers feel inadequately prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

“We need more adapted PE teachers and support staff. We need more staff development training to help us provide proper assessments and make better modifications. And we need money to buy {adaptive} equipment for modifications.”



Disability Awareness

Disability awareness training allows education professionals to be confident when addressing individuals with a sensory, intellectual or physical disability. In 2014–15, the number of children and youth ages 3–21 receiving special education services was 6.6 million, or 13 percent of all public school students.²



47%

of schools do not provide disability awareness training for their staff.

Support

20%

of physical education teachers do not receive information about students with disability at the beginning of the school year.

40%

of physical education teachers don't have an APE specialist at the district level.

20%

of physical education teachers do not collaborate with a support team (special education teachers, physical or occupational therapists, parents, etc.)

28%

of physical education teachers are not included in the development of students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan.

"I think that it would be beneficial for my district to provide training or at least some materials on this subject, even if it was every few years. This is an area that is heavily covered in workshops and webinars, but my district doesn't seem to have it as a priority."

"This {support team} is where I get my most information. For example, I had a student who is in a wheelchair and I wanted him to go swimming with all of the students. I am a certified lifeguard and a certified athletic trainer so speaking to his physical therapist made it easy for me to come up with a plan that would work for him."

"I am not always included on IEP meetings. But I usually inquire as to changes that get made. I wish I was included more"

"I am not really told of when meetings happen. But I am asked questions before or after meetings happen."

Certification

Currently, several states require an adapted physical education specialist (APE) credential for teaching APE in public schools. This credential usually requires university coursework in the area of adapted physical education and supervised student teaching experience. Other states require a teaching credential with an endorsement in APE. Many states with no credential or endorsement requirements use the adapted physical education standards (APENS) exam as their requirement for an adapted physical education specialist, and the Adapted Physical Activity Council (APAC) has developed a position statement on what is a highly qualified adapted physical education teacher (AAPAR, 2010).⁷

63%

of physical education teachers don't have a state credential in APE.

78%

of physical education teachers are not a nationally certified adapted physical educator (CAPE).

"We have a state developmental adapted physical education (DAPE) license for ages 3 to 21. Many physical education teachers have that license in my district."

"My teaching certificate originally is from another state where I had to take APE as a requirement and did student teaching in a school program for inclusion and instruction for PE. Currently, the state I am in does not offer a certification in APE."

Built Environment

There is an extensive amount of evidence suggesting that children with physical limitations or developmental delays are largely excluded from participation in local outdoor activity areas, including playgrounds. Inclusive playgrounds represent an opportunity for enjoyable, safe, and supportive learning environment in the outdoors.⁸



18%

of schools don't have a playground.

Of the schools that have playgrounds, 38% don't have playground features that enable students with disabilities to use some or all the playground equipment.

“Our playground has outdated and broken components. The asphalt is atrocious with worn out sections and gravel surfaces. It has hazardous and does not enable students with disabilities to use it.”

“We have a visually impaired student; we have reflective tape on all poles on the playground and door frames inside the building. She is in kindergarten and learning how to use her walking stick”.

Out of School Time

Research has recognized that “high-quality afterschool, out-of-school time (OST), and summer programs promote positive child and youth development, support in-school learning and facilitate the growth of a skilled workforce. Yet, millions of children, especially the neediest; including youth with disabilities, miss out on opportunities to be in a safe, enriching environment before and after school and in the summer.”¹

16%

of schools do not provide before or after school programs.

20%

of all OST programs offered in schools are inclusive of students with disabilities.

“We recently had a Bocci Club and the science teacher designed individual ramps for all players to roll the balls.”



Accessible Routes



47%

of schools do not have a walk/bike to school program.

25%

of schools have accessible routes that lead to school.

"All 4 of my schools have a program, but it is only promoted at one of my schools."

"There are accessible routes, but many of the areas are not marked or prepared for students with a visual impairment."

"We have a walking program before the school day on the track because our pathways to the school are unsafe. When students arrive at school, they can participate in the walking program."

"Most of our students take the bus to school."

"It is unsafe for our students to walk or bike to school."

Conclusions and Recommendations

- ☞ Just over half of physical education teachers surveyed are making adaptations and accommodations to facilities, rules, equipment instructions, and assessment. There is a need to increase this percentage and ensure that these adaptations are appropriate and meaningful for students with disabilities.
- ☞ Physical education teachers should discuss adaptations with students. Furthermore, the student and family should be included in the teaching/learning process.
- ☞ Professional development opportunities and inclusive materials are scarce at the district level. Efforts to increase professional development should be prioritized.
- ☞ Future training and professional development should include disability awareness.
- ☞ Over a quarter of the physical education teachers surveyed are not included in the IEP process. Physical education teachers need to be aware that they have the right to be a part of the IEP since they have to sign it, implement it and make sure that adaptations made are meaningful and realistic.
- ☞ There is a need to increase collaborations between support team (e.g. special education teacher, physical therapist, occupational therapist) and physical education teachers. Meetings of the support team and physical education teachers should occur regularly to foster collaborations.
- ☞ Based on this survey, over half of the school districts don't have an adapted physical education (APE) specialist at the district level. Some physical education teachers are not aware if a specialist is available. Districts need to include an APE specialist in their offices and promote their services.
- ☞ There is a need for more certified adapted physical education (CAPE) teachers at the school and district level.
- ☞ At the beginning of the school year, schools should communicate information about students with disabilities to their physical education teachers.
- ☞ There is a need to build inclusive playgrounds and play spaces at schools.
- ☞ Evaluation of out-of-school time programs is needed to ensure that the physical activity being provided is inclusive to students with disabilities.
- ☞ Schools need to adopt walk/bike programs to increase physical activity of the students. Involvement of the community and city government is needed to ensure routes are accessible and safe.

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To enroll in the Active Schools movement and/or access resources, visit activeschoolsus.org.

To view more resources for inclusive physical education and activity visit nchpad.org/educators.