

# IMPLEMENTING THE NEW NATIONAL STANDARDS AND GRADE-LEVEL OUTCOMES



## Helping Students with a Disability Meet the National Standards and Grade-level Outcomes

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**P**hysical education's aim is for all students to become physically literate, having the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be physically active throughout their lifespan (SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2014). Regardless of the abilities of the student, the purpose of participation in physical education remains the same: to engage in meaningful movement experiences (Gillies, 2013). How this is accomplished becomes the responsibility of physical education teachers. Students with a disability may present additional challenges for teachers as they strive to meet these individuals' unique needs. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, students with a disability have the right to receive an appropriate public education, at no cost to parents. This instruction must be guided by an individualized education plan (IEP) and must be within the least restrictive environment (LRE), or the environment where the student will be most successful. Students may receive services in a segregated class, an inclusive class or a combination of the two. Within the LRE, the student must receive adequate support to ensure that learning is occurring. Support is often limited for the student, and support for the physical educator in providing meaningful learning experiences can be limited as well (Chaapel, Columa, Lytle, & Bailey, 2012).

The new *National Standards and Grade-level Outcomes for K–12 Physical Education* (SHAPE America, 2014) provide a framework for teachers as they plan curricula, including the development of lessons, units and practice tasks, and offer a continuum of skill development to assist with the sequencing of instruction. As such, teachers must provide students with appropriate learning

experiences and practice tasks by designing developmentally appropriate activities and progressions. The purpose of this article is to provide suggestions for physical education teachers to meet the learning needs of their students with disabilities. Utilizing sequential progressions, planning deliberate practice opportunities, and creating a mastery climate will all help create effective learning experiences in physical education, especially for students with disabilities.

### Utilizing Sequential Progressions

When working with students with a disability, it is important to know the students' present levels of performance in order to create both short- and long-term goals. Appropriate goals should be based on the students' present levels as well as the grade-level outcomes delineated in the National Standards. It is imperative that the physical education teacher work with the IEP or collaborative team in place for the student, which may include the classroom teacher, therapists, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, parents and the student, if appropriate. The team should work toward similar goals that may help the child receive the necessary learning experiences to achieve success.

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**Nick Kalisperis of GenMove USA works with Special Olympics South Carolina to bring success-driven adapted physical education practices to their young athletes programs in both school settings and special events.**

An example of the value that grade-level outcomes can have in facilitating skill development involves an eight-year-old student with a motor delay who struggles with locomotor skills. After conducting an assessment of the student's skills, the test of gross motor development (TGMD-2; Ulrich, 2000) results showed that she was performing those tasks at the level of a five-year-old. With this assessment knowledge the physical educator can begin with a short-term goal represented by the locomotor outcome, S1.E1.K, which states that the student will "perform locomotor skills (hop, gallop, run, slide, skip) while maintaining balance" (SHAPE America, 2014, p. 26). As the student's skill improves, outcome S1.E1.1, which involves hopping, galloping, running, and sliding with a "mature pattern" (p. 26), can become the next short-term goal. These developmentally appropriate progressions provide guidance to the physical education teacher in using the correct sequencing of student goals and expectations.

When students are unable to achieve grade-level expectations, it is essential that the teacher establish realistic, teachable and measurable goals related to the intent of the National Standards as well as to meet the needs of the students. The IEP is used to record student learning outcomes relative to the expectations in each academic area including physical education. The physical education teacher will need to establish meaningful goals and objectives to be included in the student's IEP (Lieberman & Houston-Wilson, 2011). The establishment of meaningful IEP goals for students based on the National Standards is a powerful statement to others

about the significant role that physical education plays in the life of all students.

### Planning Deliberate Practice Opportunities

Effective learning experiences (deliberate practice) must be planned so that students are cognitively engaged (SHAPE America, 2014). If the learning activities are too simple or too complex, students will be either bored or frustrated, and they will eventually become uninterested. Establishing an appropriate level of challenge is essential for student learning, which means teachers have to develop effective progressions for instructional tasks. Teachers can do this by manipulating the conditions of the task, such as the amount of space, number of players, types of equipment, and number of decisions to be made. Practice tasks should always be designed to retain the important elements of the skill when it is used—that is, its context. For example, a task that is done in game play while moving should not be practiced in a stationary condition. It can, however, be practiced at a slower pace or with constraints on the defense to allow for student success.

Another critical component of deliberate practice is the provision of sufficient practice opportunities to improve and acquire skills and knowledge. It takes many practice hours to achieve competence (Ericsson, 2006), so teachers must consider how to maximize the number of possible practice attempts. This principle may be particularly important for students who have a disability

and who may learn at a slower rate than their peers. Maximization of practice opportunities is achieved by making sure every student has access to equipment, keeping groups of students small, and using modified and small-sided games. These types of practice tasks increase the number of touches or practice opportunities for each student. Ability grouping can also be an effective strategy for maximizing practice opportunities. Students who have similar performance levels provide an appropriate amount of challenge for one another. When higher-skilled students are grouped with lower-skilled students, it usually results in the higher-skilled students dominating the task and lower-skilled students receiving fewer practice opportunities. However, perhaps for students with a disability, it might be appropriate to pair them with skilled students who can act as role models or peer tutors, which can help them to learn a task. When working with students with a disability, teachers must consider their unique attributes, such as the pace at which they learn, as well as their present level of skill and knowledge, as they design deliberate practice tasks. Not surprisingly, the underlying principles of manipulating the task conditions remain the same. Practice tasks should be sequential, with multiple task extensions and refinements, to challenge all skill levels. Logically, a student might practice passing and receiving a soccer ball (M1.

S4.7) by first working in a stationary position with a partner and then moving in general space.

## Creating a Mastery Climate

Deliberate practice tasks and carefully constructed progressions are two elements of a mastery-oriented instructional climate. Other important elements include student choice, task differentiation, a focus on improvement, and providing corrective, specific feedback. Choice is important for student engagement, and, when possible, students should have the opportunity to select the activity as well as the practice option they wish to use. Task differentiation can be achieved by offering students a variety of equipment to use for the practice task or a choice of task difficulty. In this way students continue to make progress toward the intended outcome, but not necessarily at the same pace. Because the focus of a mastery-oriented climate is self-improvement for the student, it is not imperative that all students progress at the same rate, which is probably not realistic anyway. When the focus is on self-improvement, students do not have to worry about how they compare to others in class. Their success is determined by their own learning and progress toward the outcomes. This means teachers should



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**Faces of success in adapted physical education: GenMove's Beth Wendt utilizes nonthreatening equipment and developmentally appropriate play activities to support fine and gross motor-skill development.**



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also reduce the amount of competition in instructional activities, as competing increases the likelihood of performance comparisons (SHAPE America, 2014).

Consider a student who uses forearm crutches for mobility. If this student is learning how to dribble a soccer ball (S1.E18.1) while walking in general space, it might be easiest to use a slightly deflated ball so it moves slowly. As skill level increases, the student might use a regular ball and be paired with a peer who can help her retrieve the ball when it moves out of control. These simple

adaptations would allow the student to work at an individualized pace and focus on self-improvement. A teacher might also have to modify a grade-level outcome so the student can achieve success. For example, a student who is learning how to strike for accuracy (S1.M19.6) may choose to learn croquet rather than golf. Providing choice is a powerful yet simple way to ensure that the student experiences success.

A mastery instructional environment cannot be achieved without specific, corrective feedback to guide students toward performance improvement. Feedback can be provided in many different forms, but the bottom line is that students need information about how to correct their performance in order to do better. It is not always easy to provide enough individualized feedback to students, especially in larger classes. However, teachers can utilize many forms of assessment, such as peer assessments and self-assessments, to augment the knowledge of results and knowledge of performance they are able to give students. Creating a mastery climate for learning by implementing these strategies allows all students to flourish in physical education, although considering individual needs is essential.



Ensuring the success of all learners, physical educators work on skill development through the use of the simplicity framework and circle concept. These models allow for an individualized approach that can meet the wide variety of skill levels and unique attributes of all learners within a group setting.

## Maximizing Practice Opportunities

The physical education teacher has many options when adapting lessons to provide developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for students with disabilities. The selection of equipment that is appropriate for the individual is essential. Sometimes changing the equipment is all that is required for a student to experience success. For example, instead of using a rubber ball when practicing throwing and catching, using a yarn or newspaper ball can provide the student with the opportunity to be successful while still participating with peers.

Often students with a disability lack adequate practice time to continue the development of a skill outside of physical education. Providing more opportunities for students requires other

professionals to encourage meaningful experiences. Structured before- and after-school programs and recess can provide additional practice time that may not be fully utilized at the school. Structured activities that are planned and adequately supported would provide additional time to practice and develop skills. Finding opportunities for the family to participate in activities will also provide more practice time, as well as support the family structure and enhance relationships. Tailoring weekly homework assignments to encourage outside participation in activities is another way to provide parents with ideas to engage their children in physical activity outside of school. This homework should be fun with little to no equipment required. Another strategy to encourage additional practice opportunities is for the school to organize a family fitness/activity night. This event can be done in collaboration with the parent-teacher organization and involve the entire school, local community groups and individuals with expertise in physical activity. Money, time and skill level are often named as reasons why individuals do not engage in physical activity (Sallis & Hovell, 1990). By offering a family night, the entire family can develop skills, parents can learn new activities, and community groups can expand their clientele by exposing families to local, inexpensive opportunities.

## Conclusion

The aim of physical education is to help students, including those with a disability, to become competent movers who will enjoy a lifetime of physical activity. The National Standards and grade-level outcomes assist teachers in designing curricula, planning lessons, and developing quality learning experiences. While students with a disability may require an individualized physical education program, the underlying principles to promote student learning remain the same. By creating progressive and sequential learning tasks, combining high-quality instruction with frequent and focused practice opportunities, and fostering a mastery climate, teachers will help students become skilled and competent movers.

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