



Including Students with Disability in Physical Education At-Home Through Virtual Learning

Toolkit



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*This is a working document so be sure to check back often for updates.

This year is proving to be a challenging school year from the beginning. Schools are being required to teach their students virtually or do a hybrid model, which means that not all children will be learning in the classroom 100% of the time like they would in a traditional school setting. Schools and districts need support, resources, and encouragement as they continue to navigate the virtual mode of learning. This toolkit is designed to assist health and physical educators with tips and tools for teaching students virtually while making sure that students with disabilities are included in physical education programming.

The importance of physical education, physical activity, health education, and exercise for overall health and academic performance is well-documented. Physical activity boosts the immune system, promotes health, and relieves stress. Evidence-based, scientific research also supports the importance of physical activity to a student's academic performance, mental health, self-concept, and overall well-being. Physical education is a key ingredient as schools work to educate the whole child physically, emotionally, and socially.



That is why we have created this **Inclusive K-12 Physical Education Toolkit** that provides strategies and suggestions for schools to implement safe and effective physical education programs virtually that is inclusive for students with disabilities. Each school community has its own set of circumstances and characteristics that influence what is appropriate for its schools; thus, this is not a one-size-fits-all list. It is important to note that this is a working document as things change daily with guidelines and recommendations related to education and learning with COVID-19.

The [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#) recommend that children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 years do **60 minutes or more** of **moderate-to-vigorous** physical activity daily. Regular physical activity in children and adolescents promotes health and fitness and reduces the risk of developing obesity and other chronic conditions. To achieve this recommendation children and youth must participate in a quality physical education program and physical activity throughout the day in addition to recreational or competitive sports.

Physical education provides learning opportunities for the students to be able to choose lifelong healthy behaviors through movement while engaging in emotional and social activities necessary for human development. Physical activity alone cannot offer all these benefits, especially when it is delivered from home. We understand that physical activity at home is important during this time, but it should not be viewed as a substitute for a quality physical education program. To learn more about physical education vs. physical activity, [click here](#).



The virtual learning approach creates challenges for everyone involved including parents that are working from home and already have a busy schedule, students that enjoy participating in physical activity in a group setting, and teachers trying to build creative ideas to replicate virtual activities that happen in the classroom. Other challenges may be lack of equipment, limited space, lack of motivation, and not feeling knowledgeable enough to provide assistance or support for the students while learning at home. Remember that teachers are skillful professionals in their field. Teachers can make a great contribution by creating a **FUN** environment.

Considerations for Teachers

Check-in: Begin each session by asking the students about their emotional state. Checking in helps to establish a positive attitude towards the activities of the day. Ask questions such as:

- How are you feeling today?
- What is on your mind?
- What are you looking forward to today?

Establish a routine: Students perform better when there is a structure and a routine in place. Use a large calendar to display activities. Utilize a message board to provide positive feedback and to track everything that has been accomplished. Schedule when physical activity should take place.

Prioritize fun! Make an effort to have a positive attitude for the activity that is being conducted. Show positivity and acceptance of the task in hands through your actions. Laughing, cheering, and participating provide encouragement and positive feedback. Create a fun environment by utilizing decorations, allowing students to dress up, or playing music during the activity.

Promote virtual social interaction: Let your students connect socially with their peers via video conference or chat during the physical activity time.

Get in on the action: Encourage family participation as students may feel inclined to complete the lessons. Take note that actions speak louder than words in the student's desire to be involved in healthy lifestyles.

Make space: Ensure that your students have enough space to move and perform physical activity. Consider students utilizing mobility devices and blind students as they might need a larger space free of obstacles. This is a perfect time to encourage parents to declutter and make an accessible workout space. Allow the students to design and create a workout space by also selecting music and decorations in the new area. Consider utilizing outdoor spaces.



It is important: Acknowledge how important physical activity is for health and wellness. Participation in physical activity provides health, wellness, social, and brain function benefits. It is also known that students behave better and perform better during testing and other school subjects after participating in physical activity.

Address Social Emotional Learning (SEL): What is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)? It is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2013). Now, more than ever, students are experiencing more stress and trauma because of the effects of COVID-19. Every teacher and class must support the SEL needs of all students. There are considerations that health and physical education teachers should think about related to SEL. For example, every child a teacher encounters may have a different social and emotional need. To meet the social and emotional needs of every child, here are suggested strategies. Strategies such as visuals aids may include posters. The use of posters would be a great way to build a social and

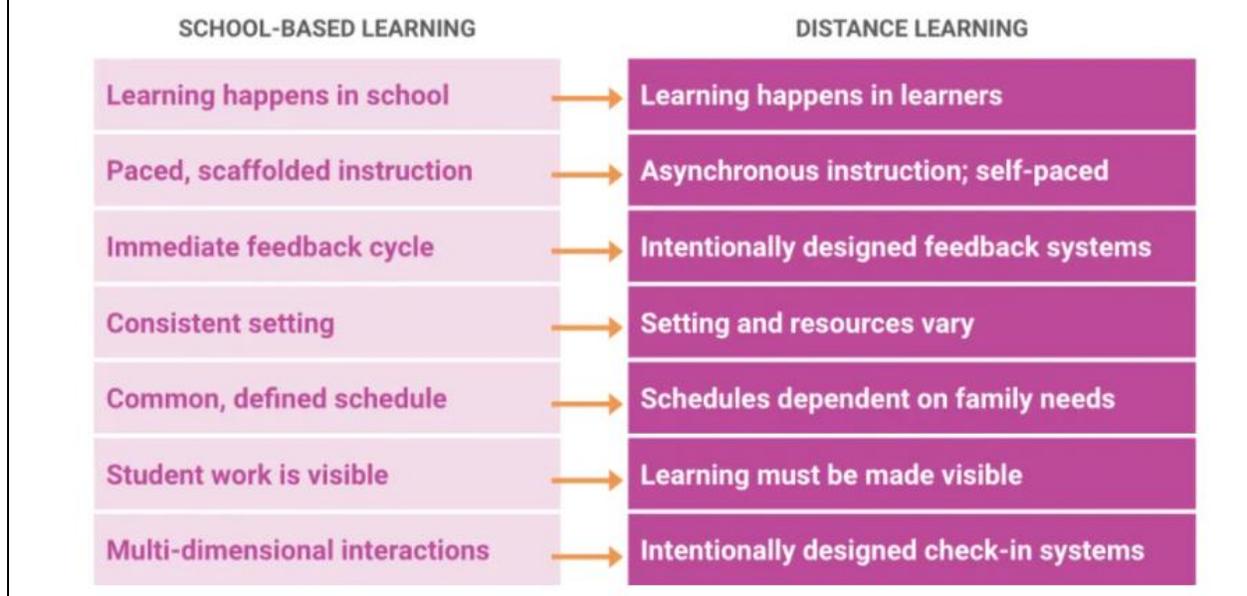
emotional learning culture. The “conflict corner” poster is an effective visual for students to use when they may have a disagreement. The students could go to the poster, follow the conflict corner steps, and solve the disagreement. Often, the teacher does not need to intervene. Teachers may simply ask students to complete a quick 1-3 question survey on how they are feeling before class starts. This is another strategy to use for our virtual learners. The final strategy is more of a challenge; however, it also assists in building a social and emotional culture. The challenge would be to encourage students to do something nice for someone during class every day. These are just a few suggested strategies that are simple. When providing simple strategies such as visuals, surveys or challenges the social and emotional culture is being supported in your classroom. Health Education: Work with your classroom teachers to ensure students are being taught the standards. It is more important now than ever for our students to learn the standards and to understand the importance of being healthy, doing their part in the community to promote healthy behaviors and disease prevention.

Health Education: Work with your classroom teachers to make sure students are being taught the standards for health education. It is more important now than ever for our students to learn the standards and begin to understand how to be healthy and do their part in the community to promote healthy behaviors and disease prevention.

General Considerations:

When teachers hear the phrase “School-Based Learning”, they often correlate those words with a school building, traditional learning, being visible, or having a consistent setting regarding learning. When teachers hear the words “Distance Learning” many terms or phrases may come to mind as well. Such as, technology, learning platforms, or learning away from the school building. For teachers to be successful, it is important for them to know the difference between the two phrases. Teachers need to understand there has been a shift in learning. Katie Martin, the VP of Professional Learning at Altitude Learning, has developed a graphic below that illustrates the shift in learning. Once teachers understand the shift in learning they can begin to develop effective lessons that meet the needs of all learners.

Key Shifts and Considerations for Distance Learning



Martin, Katie. 2020. [How Can We Make the Most of Synchronous and Asynchronous Time in Distance Learning?](#)

Consider Collaborating with the Following individuals at your system:

1. Library Media Specialist
2. Technology Coach/Specialist
3. Instructional Coach

Collaboration is key to assisting teachers plan for consistency and equitable virtual instructional environments. The individuals listed above can offer virtual learning strategies, websites, applications, and technology when developing your lesson. Consistent collaboration will ensure success during the virtual learning experience for you and your students.

Creating Inclusive Handouts and Picture Cards

Handouts can be class worksheets, pamphlets, and evaluation forms. Creating an inclusive handout should consist of accessible, culturally, and linguistically appropriate formats to promote understanding and should be readily available in alternate formats (see bulleted list below).

Handouts may include large, bold, clear print, and pictures. Individuals with an intellectual disability may tend to be more successful with color-coordinated resources and pictures. Individuals with intellectual disability may also interpret concepts, words, and pictures literally, so try to avoid using abstract concepts that could be misinterpreted. Some students may have a lower reading level or may not be able to read at all. Voice-over resources that provide audio, words and pictures of the concept being explained may help students succeed. Providing educational materials and handouts during the lesson

is a great way for students to be involved during class. Note that some worksheets may be most beneficial to an individual with a disability if a caregiver or interpreter can assist; providing materials for both the student and the caregiver are recommended. Use the following as a guide to promoting inclusive and accessible handouts:

- Consider individuals with disability and groups that focus on disability-related topics when targeting various potential audiences and tailor how information should be presented.
- Use accessible formats, such as contrasting images and lettering, large and sans serif fonts (such as size 18; Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, Tahoma, or Veranda), or Braille versions.
- Avoid italics, if possible. Use bold or underline to enhance words.
- Ensure that materials include images of people with and without a disability
- A simple sentence structure is vital.
- At times, an assistant, caregiver, or support person may be appropriate for some students when completing worksheets or assignments.

Remote Learning Recommendations for Physical Education Grades K-12

The uniqueness of the physical education classroom presents many challenges as teachers strive to provide an effective virtual learning environment. Consideration must be given to scheduling, classroom protocol, and the teaching environment.

Scheduling: The [2016 Shape of the Nation report](#) recommends for physical education and physical activity time is at least 150 minutes per week of physical education in elementary schools and at least 225 minutes per week in middle schools and high schools. Achieve best practice of students being moderately-to-vigorously physically active for at least 50 percent of physical education class time.

Elementary Schools: Typically, elementary school physical education classes are exceptionally large, often exceeding 75 or more students (i.e., 'grade level' physical education when all classrooms of the same grade level attend physical education at the same time). Lower pupil: teacher ratios are essential to creating a positive online learning experience. The modifications required are dependent on the individual situation; however, guidelines for virtual learning must be met.

- Modify classes so that one teacher has half of the class in a virtual classroom, while the other teacher has the other half of the students at different times to ensure teaching is occurring online.
- The physical education teacher should provide activities such as energizers, brain boosters, fitness activities, or mindful minute activities that can be done at home in addition to the online virtual classroom.
- Maintain a schedule for physical education classes as if students were face-to-face. Use online resources to help students reach 30 minutes of daily physical education. The physical education teacher is still responsible for providing daily lesson plans.

- Incorporate virtual physical education instruction within the class time. The physical education teacher is expected to teach “live” using technology such as Google Meet, Zoom Conferencing, Microsoft Teams, etc. During this instruction, the physical education teacher will supervise, monitor students, and provide feedback while teaching the class virtually.
- Create schedules with adequate time between classes so teachers can prepare appropriate grade level activities for each class.

Middle Schools and High Schools: While the pupil-teacher ratio of middle and high school physical education classes is usually appropriate there is often a large number of students in one class. Remote classes must be organized to assure the recommended physical education teacher-student ratio.

- 50-minute classes are the recommended time frame for physical education. The use of pre-recorded instructional videos created by physical education teachers may be a supplemental resource to teach specific activities remotely.
- Incorporate virtual physical education instruction with the physical education teacher teaching “live” using technology such as Google Meet, Zoom Conferencing, Microsoft Teams, etc.
- Create schedules with adequate time between classes so teachers may prepare for the next grade level.



Teaching Environment: Physical Education lessons can be modified for remote teaching knowing that students will have different size spaces to participate in physical activity lessons.

All grade levels:

- Remind students that the space they are using for remote learning should be organized to allow for movement when appropriate. If possible, conduct some remote physical education classes outdoors using field space, sidewalk, driveway, back yard, etc. whenever possible. Teachers should monitor weather conditions to determine the setting and appropriate activity level for a physical education class. 40 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit is the recommended

temperature for outdoor activities, with wind chill and heat index considered.

- If there is more than one physical education teacher, it is recommended to divide the physical education classes up at different times to ensure class sizes are manageable for online learning.

Equipment: Equipment usage is fundamental to a physical education classroom. However, many activities require no equipment (dance, calisthenics, aerobic activities, mindfulness, and others). If equipment is used, strategies must be developed to ensure that students can secure the equipment that is needed for remote learning.

All grade levels:

- Use equipment that students may already have at home or can make as a homework assignment. Examples: yarn/rice balls, sports balls, bean bags, striking implements, hula hoops, jump ropes, scoops, cones, stretch bands, and fitness balls.
- Create learning activities that utilize limited amounts of equipment.
- Create and plan virtual activities using equipment that each student may have at home such as beanbags, jump ropes, yarn ball, scarves, hoops, any type of ball, stretch bands, and/or fitness balls.
- Some pieces of equipment (bean bags, balls, scoops) can be created using readily available materials. Create a homework assignment for students to make different types of small balls or scoops to use during virtual class for the elementary level.

Classroom Protocol: Organizational procedures are fundamental to the effectiveness and efficiency of a physical education class. Procedures must be clearly defined, understood by the students, and managed by the teachers to ensure learning takes place.

All grade levels:

- Provide clearly stated objectives for each virtual class in Schoology with any assignments that correspond with each unit.
- Establish clear and concise routines/expectations to help students understand the concept of learning virtually in a physical education classroom.
- Remind students of how well they are doing. Provide positive reinforcement throughout each virtual class time.
- Keep the students engaged and focused during each virtual class by preparing them each week with the activity of the day.
- Eliminate distractions while teaching virtually.
- Comply with online safety guidelines for virtual learning.
- Encourage students to be dressed for physical education. Require students to wear closed-toe shoes in virtual physical education classes while learning from home.

Curriculum: Physical Education standards should continue to be the focus of lessons and activities that are safe and appropriate. Content should include motor skill development and performance (standards 1 and 2), health-enhancing physical activity and fitness (standard 3), personal and social behavior (standard 4) and Standard 5 (value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction).

All grade levels:

- Include activities that promote physical activity and encourage students to move in a safe, effective environment.
- Re-prioritize curriculum to focus on individual fitness, challenges, and learning goals more on individual skill work that will promote physical activity.
- Use blended learning classrooms for concepts related to standards, utilizing technology platforms.
- Include social and emotional learning activities for students.
- Teaching individual soccer, basketball, or sticking skills may be taught virtually provided students have the appropriate ball.
- Student-created videos-basic sport skills, fitness, games, etc.

Elementary Schools: At this level, the focus should be on helping students become skillful movers. Students are developing gross and fine motor control, physical strength and endurance, and coordination; therefore, individualized activities focusing on locomotor movements, rhythms/dance, manipulative skill development (throwing, kicking, dribbling, striking, etc.), and non-manipulative skill development (balancing, pushing, etc.) are most appropriate. These activities can be performed individually.

Middle Schools: Focus on individualized fitness activities (walk, jog, hike, resistance activities), biking, orienteering, scavenger hunts, dance and rhythms, sports skills practice with an individual piece of equipment (soccer, footgolf, disc golf, Frisbee, Pickleball, badminton, golf) provided students have the appropriate equipment at home.

High Schools: Focus on individualized fitness activities, rhythms, and movement skills needed to pursue a lifetime of physical activity. This can include aerobic activities, weight training, resistance exercises, calisthenics, and flexibility exercises should be provided. Dance activities can also include and can range from line dance to dance for aerobic fitness. Ensuring that students have the movement skills needed to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity should also be a focus. Depending upon individual student need, skill remediation might be needed. Content should also be taught relative to the importance of physical activity and healthy nutrition. At home/ community activities should also be encouraged; examples of these could be running clubs, cross country cycling, hiking, 5Ks, and at-home workout videos.

Tips for Including Students with Disabilities:

Adaptations to a curriculum are made to increase participation and to ensure that everyone can successfully participate in all the activities provided by the curriculum in a safe manner. The adaptations made are not to modify the curriculum but to accommodate activities that allow students with disabilities to participate fully and be successful. All the objectives and outcomes should not be changed when creating adaptations. Regardless of the type of adaptations made to the activities, they should be goal-oriented so that everyone is successful in the activity that the practitioners/staff are teaching that day. The staff/practitioners mustn't do over-adapt to the extent that the activity is completely different and does not provide enjoyment and benefits to all the participants involved. Adaptations should never change the curriculum!

There are times when an adaptation is not needed, and simple accommodation is all that is needed to provide a successful outcome for a student. Accommodations are changes presented to participants with disabilities during the activity. For example, a student can use his wheelchair during running activity. It is important that practitioners/staff recognize when accommodations are enough, and adaptations are not needed. Participants are often the best resource when creating adaptations and accommodations. Make sure to involve the participant during the process. They will know with more certainty how to perform a skill or adapt certain activities. This is also a good practice to allow them to fully participate in their learning. Be sure to use inclusive language when teaching and discussing different ways to do the activity so that a student who needs an adaptation or modification doesn't feel singled out or on display during a lesson. Portray students with disabilities positively by focusing on what they can do rather than focusing on their limitations and avoid language that makes students with disability out to be victims or objects of pity.

To create appropriate adaptations to the curriculum, teachers should consider making changes to the skills, instruction, rules, equipment, and environment. One of the simplest ways of adapting an activity is to modify or substitute the skill involved.

At-home adaptations

Some students will require adaptations to the activity to complete the task. You should be providing the activities that include the adaptations based on the student's needs. For example, a student that uses a wheelchair can do arm marching movements instead of marching with their legs. Below are some considerations when making adaptations that you can work through with the family members:

Space adaptations:

- Always ensure all spaces are open, clear of mobility impediments, and that pathways and other routes are unbroken, seamless, slip-resistant, and feature occasional seating and balance options (e.g., chairs, couches, handrails).
- Modify play areas by making them smaller or larger. For example, a student that uses a mobility device such as crutches may need a smaller area to avoid fatigue while a student that uses a wheelchair might need a larger area to be able to move efficiently.
- Provide a hard surface that is relatively flat and barrier-free for students to be able to move efficiently while using a wheelchair or other mobility device.
- Provide padding such as a non-abrasive rug or rubber tile when transitioning during floor activities.

Skill adaptations:

- If appropriate, allow siblings or other family members to help with the activities as peer mentors.
- Use pads/floor markers for students to locate their designated spots.
- Pay attention to the amount of sensory input in a small space (noise, lighting, amount of people moving at once, etc.).

Equipment adaptations:

- Adapting target sizes and locations (e.g., lower a basketball goal, move a throwing target to the ground if a participant is only able to roll an item at the target).
- Provide additional or modified equipment (e.g., for a throwing activity, multiple kinds of projectiles (baseball, bean bag, balloon, etc.).
- Use various types of balls (e.g., different sizes, colors, textures, weights).
- Use lighter, softer, or larger balls that are easier to catch.
- Provide ground targets for students who may only be able to accurately roll objects.
- Provide grip devices (e.g., athletic tape, Ace bandage, Velcro cuff) for students who do not have the grip strength to hold a striking device such as a bat or tennis racquet.



Instruction adaptations:

- Provide simple instructions and basic instructions. Ensure that the student comprehends the instructions given by asking for understanding. Ask the students to repeat the instructions to you instead of asking them: “Do you understand?”
- The parent can demonstrate the movement, task, or skill to provide a visual learning opportunity.
- Make sure all tasks have been demonstrated previously by visual cards, demonstrations, or verbal instructions.

Skill adaptations:

- Allow participants to perform a dance or other types of movement in a seated position.
- Allow extra time to complete a skill such as completing a pass or hitting a ball with a bat.

- Choose music with a slower tempo when performing rhythm or choreographed routines.
- Allow students to clap hands or tap feet instead of jumping.
- Practice slower or less complex rhythms/movements before moving to more complex rhythms/movements.

Safety:

Staff and practitioners should always consider safety. Safety should be addressed during activity planning, activity prescription, and after activity. Be consistent and intentional about reinforcing safety. Here are some events that you might want to prompt the parent to stop the activity:

- Chest pain (angina)
- Shortness of breath, wheezing
- Leg cramps, or claudication (cramping pain in the leg is induced by exercise, typically caused by obstruction of the arteries)
- Light-headedness, confusion, pallor (unhealthy pale appearance), nausea, or cold/clammy skin (poor circulation)
- A noticeable change in heart rhythm
- The physical or verbal manifestation of severe fatigue
- Subject requests to stop
- Faulty equipment
- Weather issues such as lightning or extreme heat

Safety considerations should also include these additional inclusive efforts:

- Provide padding and adapted equipment and allow participants to become familiar with how to properly use the equipment.
- Avoid using equipment, such as balloons or balls that are made with latex as this is a common allergy.
- Individuals with spinal cord injury might not regulate body heat efficiently. Provide fans or spray water bottles to assist with cooling the body from hot environments such as outdoors.
- Encourage movement and healthy nutrition to prevent the development of pressure sores, especially for individuals who use wheelchairs.
- Provide a safe zone/quiet space for individuals who may become overstimulated in loud, busy spaces.
- Provide spaces to rest or assistive devices if an individual easily becomes tired during activity.
- Consider medications that may affect exercise tolerance or performance.

Additional Suggestions for Physical Education Teachers:

- Include COVID-19 safety strategies in lesson plans just as a precautionary method to help children stay safe and healthy.
- Communicate to students on the first day of class that physical education may be different than in the past; however, it is still very important to continue having physical education classes each day.
- Consider a [contract](#) between the student and teacher which states the student agrees to maintain required class attendance, follow instructions provided by the physical education teacher, follow strategies and routines provided by the physical education teacher, follow game rules provided by the teacher, and let the teacher know if they are feeling ill. This memo may

serve to place more accountability on the student. Share how important Remote learning is and will be a different way of still having school each day.

- Communicate with students every day the measures being taken to encourage physical education is being taught remotely to ensure everyone stays healthy, especially during this time.
- Communicate and document needs and concerns to the administration.
- Communicate with classroom teachers, administration, and parents on ways that you are keeping children physically active and involved while still providing quality physical education.

Physical activity at home is a great opportunity to take an active approach in your student's learning experience. They will value you being a part of their learning process. Pat yourself on the back and remember that what you are doing to ensure that your students are engaging in physical activity is very remarkable and a great opportunity to bond and spend more time together. Remember to always have fun.

Resources for Physical Education Teachers

The resources listed below are tools for use in guiding your instruction to ensure the success of all students.

National Center on Health Physical Activity and Disability

Articles

- [“Herencia Hispana”: A Look from A Cultural Educational Context](#)
- [Activity and Adaptation Cards](#)
- [Autism and Exercise](#)
- [Brain Boosters](#)
- [Considerations for Parents During Physical Activity at Home](#)
- [Inclusive Out-of-School Time](#)
- [Inclusive PE QR Code Scavenger Hunt Inclusive](#)
- [Inclusive Physical Education](#)
- [Inclusive Physical Education Fitness Stations](#)
- [Inclusive Physical Education: Disability Awareness](#)

- [Inclusive Physical Education: Teaching Style and Format](#)
- [Low Budget Adapted Physical Education Equipment Ideas](#)
- [Peer Tutoring in General Physical Education](#)
- [Physical Activity, Leisure and Recreation for Youth with Disabilities: A Primer for Parents](#)
- [Physical Education Distance Learning at Home](#)
- [Pocket Tool for Adapted Physical Education Teachers](#)
- [Sitting Volleyball Unit](#)
- [Sitting Volleyball: A Skill Enhancing and Physically Demanding Activity](#)

- [Wellness Challenge Coloring Book](#)

Guidebooks

- [Discover Inclusive Physical Education: A Guidebook for Educators](#)
- [Discover Inclusive Playgrounds: A Guidebook about inclusive playground elements](#)
- [Discover Inclusive Safe Routes to School: A Guidebook for Including Students with Disability in SRTS](#)
- [Discover Inclusive School Wellness: An Addendum to the Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: A Guide for Schools](#)
- [Discover Leisure: A guide on understanding and appreciating the value and importance of leisure-time physical activity for youth with disabilities](#)
- [Get the Facts: An online magazine that will help you become more physically active or, if you are a service provider or family member, equip you with the knowledge to provide a more enriching physical activity program.](#)

Videos

- [Autism and Exercise](#) video series
- [Brain Booster: Perimeter](#)
- [Disability Awareness: Intellectual Disability](#)
- [Disability Awareness: Physical Disability](#)
- [Disability Awareness: Sensory Disability](#)
- [Environment Adaptations](#)
- [Equipment Adaptations](#)
- [General Disability Awareness](#)
- [How I Walk: A Campaign to Rebrand Walking](#) video series
- [Inclusion in Every Play](#)
- [Inclusive Class Design](#)
- [Kids Adaptive Yoga](#)
- [Kids Korner Nutrition: Heart-Healthy Snacks](#)
- [Kids Korner Nutrition: Quick and Healthy Lunches](#)
- [Kids Korner Playlist](#)
- [Mary's Top 10 Communication Tips](#)
- [Skills Adaptations](#)
- [Sports Series](#)

Alliance for a Healthier Generation

- [COVID-19 & Back to School](#)

American Psychological Association

- [Accessibility Guidelines for Speakers](#)

Ask, Listen, Learn

- [Health Education Lesson Plans](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- [Toolkit for K-12 Schools](#)

Playworks

- [Play at Home](#)

Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) America

- [School Reentry Considerations](#)
- [Virtual Resources for Health and PE](#)

SPARK™home

- [Free Teacher & Parent Resources for Distance Learning](#)

Kaiser Permanente®

- [Planning for the Next Normal at School: Keeping students, staff, and families safe and healthy](#)

Varsity Brands

- [Believe in you Social and Emotional Learning Empowerment Program](#)

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