

**How To Overcome
The Daily Obstacles Of An Itinerant Specialist
(APE/OT/Speech)**

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To be an effective itinerant specialist, one must possess a variety of skills; being just a good teacher is not enough. An itinerant position requires organization and good communication skills. It is also very helpful to be open-minded, flexible, and creative. In many cases, circumstances out of your control make it difficult to fulfill your services. However, with planning, and being prepared for the unexpected, you can get your job done.

SCHEDULING

Before any teaching can be done, scheduling must be attended to. Taking in to account your caseload and number of school sites, you need to remember you cannot please everyone. However, you need to create a schedule that you can live with, since you are doing the traveling from school to school.

Golden Rules to Scheduling:

1. Give yourself plenty of time between classes especially if you are going to different sites. You need to allow for traffic, parking, loading and unloading equipment.
2. Try and schedule students on the same day at the same school site.
3. Communicate with classroom teachers early in year or even at the end of the previous year to establish an agreed upon time for PE. Many teachers, I have found, will schedule around my time rather than for me to fit in their set schedules.
4. Take time to establish a good communication with teachers you are working with, if they understand your demands in the district, often they will make the adjustments.
5. Limit late in the afternoon classes if possible unless you are at your home site. I have found extreme difficulty leaving schools sites when parents are all lined up to pick up their children.

6. Give yourself windows of time for assessing students. By scheduling this time, you are less likely to cancel a class.
7. Once your schedule is set, do your best to maintain it and be on time. Always respect the teachers' schedule. However, if something does come up and there is a need to reschedule, communicate this as soon as possible to the teacher.
8. Load your cell phone with the school site phone numbers and make sure each of your teachers has your cell number to be able to get in touch with you. It is nice to be told when that one student you need to see is absent.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Setting-Up Equipment: You don't want to waste class time or your time setting up equipment. I have found a system that works well; it allows me to set up in minimal time while the students are warming up. For every class, we start with a routine warm-up of exercises and stretches; I lead the warm-up for the duration of a song. After the exercises, I then have my students jog around a set perimeter, circle, basketball court, etc. The students jog for the duration of another song. During this time, I set up the activities and communicate with the aides and classroom teacher what I want them to do at an activity station. At the end of the song, everything is set-up, and everyone is ready to go. At no time are the students waiting. I use this system with all populations, and in all cases the students quickly learn the routine.

Activity Stations: On one hand it may seem that planning and setting up stations is a lot of extra work. However, the benefits are worth the extra effort.

- Limits wait time and increases activity time.
- Each student can have their own piece of equipment. (Less equipment needed.)
- Specific skills can be focused on at each station.
- Utilizes the aides and classroom teachers, for they can run a station for you.
- General Ed students quickly learn the routine and often can participate at each station with only minimal guidance. This allows for you to observe and help students as needed.

- Allows opportunity for assessment and collecting data.
- Keeps the lesson moving, students don't get bored doing the same activity for a long period of time. (Rotation is done after the completion of a song.)

Providing Services: In each district, there are guidelines when it comes to services and required minutes. However, if possible, I suggest you use the system of total minutes per month rather than minutes per week or number of lessons. Minutes per month, gives you flexibility in your schedule and most importantly it accommodates holidays, pupil free days, and sick days. I still suggest having a set schedule, however, minutes per month allows you to make adjustments in your schedule to fulfill the required minutes. In my district, I found this system to work well and I easily met the required minutes for each of my students.

TRAVELING WITH EQUIPMENT

A challenge for the itinerant teacher is to have PE equipment. You may be lucky and have access to the equipment at the school site and won't need to haul your own from school to school. However, if you are like most itinerants, you have to provide your own equipment. I found it very difficult to have everything I need for my lessons in just a ball bag. I use a wheel barrel, it is my classroom on wheels. I travel with a rechargeable speaker for my IPOD and have my music loaded on my iPhone as well as backup. I always carry basic equipment including tissues, pens, paper, chalk, stamps, Popsicle sticks, and cones in my cart at all times. I also keep standby equipment in my cart so I will always have an activity no matter what situation arises. In addition, I keep a basic set of equipment to be able to check goals at any time as well. Obviously your vehicle must be taken in consideration when selecting some sort of cart, however, anything with wheels will make your day run smoother, and will save your back.

ASSESSING & DATA COLLECTING

One of the biggest challenges is assessing students and collecting data. This can be very time consuming and overwhelming for some. The formal

assessment of a student is not too difficult because you should have allowed time in your schedule for assessing students. In addition to allowing time in your schedule, it is also helpful to have an assessment bag organized. Keep all the necessary equipment for your assessments in one bag, so you are always prepared. This will save you time in many ways, and is worth the initial preparation.

Collecting data always seems to be a challenge and inconvenience for many. However, you need to have this data to assess students and track their progress on their individual goals. I do not feel comfortable in an IEP reporting on the progress of a student's goal without the data. I may know if a child has met the goal or not, but I am much more confident and credible when I can show the parents the data collection worksheet indicating how many times I officially attempted to meet the goal. To help collect the data and monitor progress, I created a goal worksheet. I use a worksheet for each goal for each student and keep these worksheets in a notebook that I have with me at all times.

I collect data by three main methods:

1. Once a month, I do a goal checking lesson. The stations I plan are basic skills. Most of my students have at least one goal that is throwing, catching, kicking, dribbling, etc., so these stations provide practice time for them. The aides and classroom teacher manage each station so I am free to assess a student's progress individually and record the results.
2. I am a very thematic teacher, the equipment and music will change but the skills do not. Whether the students are throwing pumpkins or snowballs they are still practicing throwing. When I create a station, I select a skill I want to focus on for the station that I will facilitate. Then, when I divide the class into groups I make sure I only have one or two students at the most in each group that has a goal that corresponds to the skill at my station. This way, I am able to collect data on only one or two students in the time allotted. Obviously on these days I am not collecting data on every student, but it allows me to collect data more than one time a month.
3. I incorporate our assessments into our overall PE program. I have students do the 6 minute cardiovascular endurance test at least twice a month, I also regularly have our students do curl-ups and push-ups and keep track of their progress. Even if a student does not have a fitness goal, I still record the data. I have found this information

helpful especially when selecting future goals. I also feel it is important to track progress in areas other than their goals to have an overall picture of their performance in physical education.

WORKING WITH CLASSROOM TEACHERS:

In many ways it is extremely important to have a good working relationship with the classroom teachers. Establishing mutual respect for one another is the key to success as an itinerant PE specialist. The effort you make in working with the classroom teachers not only will make your job easier, the students will definitely benefit.

As a Specialist: Every school district has a different policy concerning a prep period for elementary classroom teachers. If you are providing their prep period, it is rare that you are providing all the required PE minutes for the students, as a result the classroom teacher is responsible for the remainder minutes. As a specialist, you should try to be available with helpful hints for the classroom teacher. I have found teachers not only receptive but also grateful when I have offered suggestions and activities; as a result our students do get their full required minutes.

No Prep: If the classroom teacher is with you, don't have them just watch or sit and do paperwork; assign them a station and get them involved. In my district, the classroom teachers do not have prep, so the classroom teacher and aides, with my guidance, help facilitate the PE lesson. It is a great advantage to have the extra adults; the students stay on task, there are minimal behavioral problems and I can work on individual goals while the other students are involved in activity. Another advantage to have the classroom teachers out there with you is that they see what you do first hand and hopefully will try some of the activities on their own with their class.

Collaboration: I have incorporated many of the students' classroom goals in my lessons. In some way through an activity, I will have students sorting colors, matching letters, doing puzzles, doing math problems, etc. Teachers appreciate the effort I make and the students benefit working on their academic goals while being active.

Physical Education Support Staff Responsibilities

In my years of teaching, I have had support staff for my APE classes as well as my extra large classes. As a consultant, I hear from many PE teachers that they are frustrated with their support staff. Support staff has been provided to help manage the class and create a positive learning environment for all students. Unfortunately, many support staff are hired to fill a position rather than finding someone that has experience or is even interested in physical education. No matter who is assigned to you, be grateful for the help and get them on "your team". Do not wait or assume someone else will train them, it is your class; it is your responsibility. The following are the main points I address with my staff.

SAFETY

The most important responsibility of a teacher and aides is to provide a safe environment for your students to learn.

Provide active rather than passive supervision.

- Proximity-noting the distance that you are from the students/activity
- Scanning-looking at the entire area regularly
- Positioning-placing yourself so that you can see everyone and everything
- Always have your eyes facing the sun
- Eliminate long lines or waiting time
- Speak loud enough for all students to hear.

PROFESSIONALISM Students learn by EXAMPLE

- Be on Time....and in place when the class begins
- Help with set up of day's equipment and make sure you know the day's lesson
- Provide Support as needed....as teacher is instructing or speaking to the students you need to roam the area and address disruptive behavior.

SUPERVISIONrequires full attention at all times.

****Minimize conversations with students and focused on the physical education environment.**

****Breaks/lunch are provided and the only time you can leave the class.**

Physical Education TEAM

YES...you are a team member to create a positive learning environment for ALL students. You are to provide support to the teacherproviding class management as needed. If you see an issuestep up and handle it...NO do not assume someone else will take care of it.

ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION PRE-REFERRAL CHECKLIST

Request for motor observation or consultation of the Adapted Physical Education Specialist may be initiated by a parent, teacher, nurse, or other concerned school staff member.

Date of Request: _____ Referred by: _____
Student's Name: _____ Birth date: _____ Grade: _____
School: _____ Teacher: _____ Room #: _____
Parent or Legal Guardian: _____
Home Address: _____
Telephone #: (Home) _____ (Work) _____
Language Spoken at Home: _____
Recess/Lunch Times: _____ PE Days & Times: _____

Reason for Referral/ Specify Areas of Concern: _____

Specify Pertinent Medical Information (if any): _____

Does the student receive any other Special Education Services ? : Yes _____ No _____

Which Services ? : _____

Difficulty in performing the various motor skills listed below **MAY** indicate a need for Adapted Physical Education services. Please check all that apply in accordance to the grade level physical education standards and as observed in physical education lessons as well as free play opportunities (recess).

<u>SKILL</u>	<u>CAN</u>	<u>MOST OF THE TIME</u>	<u>OFTEN</u>	<u>SOME OF THE TIME</u>	<u>CANNOT</u>
Balance on one foot (2 Secs Min.)					
Hop					
Jump					
Skip					
Gallop					
Slide					
Run					
Bounce and catch to self					
Dribble a ball with hands					
Catch a ball with hands					
Throw a ball 15 feet					
Kick a stationary ball					
Kick a rolled ball					
Hit a ball off a batting "T"					
Jump rope turned by others					
Turn own jump rope					
Falls excessively					
Awkward and clumsy when moving					

Please return this completed form to the Adapted Physical Education Specialist at your school or district office. Receipt of form will be acknowledged via appropriate line of communication. (E-mail)

ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION

ANNUAL GOAL/ DATA COLLECTION

Student: _____ **IEP Date:** _____

Annual Goal: _____

Criteria: _____

Benchmark #1: _____

Criteria: _____

[illegible]

Benchmark #2: _____

Criteria: _____

[illegible]

Benchmark #3: _____

Criteria: _____

[illegible]

Annual Goal: _____

Criteria: _____

[illegible]

Goal Met: _____ **Partial:** _____ **Discontinued:** _____