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Vermont's New Statewide Physical Education Assessment: FAQ

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) has adopted FitnessGram and the Brockport Physical Fitness test as its statewide physical education assessments for state and federal accountability purposes. This FAQ provides introductory information about the assessment, timelines for implementation, and the respective roles of the AOE and field educators in facilitating this change.

Why is Vermont introducing a common Physical Education assessment into the state accountability system?

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to develop a State Accountability Plan that employs a variety of school quality indicators. Vermont's ESSA State Plan includes Physical Education as one of four academic content areas to be assessed. Additionally, in the Education Quality Standards, Vermont has articulated a commitment to education and evaluation that supports the whole child, knowing that healthier students perform better in every other aspect of school. FitnessGram and Brockport will be used to collect data and the results will support state and local educators in promoting healthy, active student lifestyles.

What comprises the PE assessment?

The Vermont PE Assessment is made up of FitnessGram, the Brockport Physical Fitness Test, and a soon to be developed Alternate PE Assessment for students who are unable to access FitnessGram or Brockport. FitnessGram is a comprehensive health-related fitness assessment developed by The Cooper Institute for Youth, and is currently the most widely used fitness assessment in the nation. The FitnessGram software includes ActivityGram, a detailed assessment of physical activity that uses the physical activity pyramid as a basis for analyzing personal activity patterns. The principal mission of the FitnessGram/ActivityGram program is to promote lifelong physical activity among youth. The Brockport Physical fitness test was developed as a companion to the FitnessGram assessment for students who need modifications and accommodations to the protocols based on specific physical needs.

Which students will be assessed?

The assessment will be administered to all publically funded students in the 4th and 7th grade and for the 2018 pilot year, SU/SDs have the option of collecting high school data from either all 9th grade students **or** all 10th grade students. Schools serving these students need to plan appropriate instruction, test practice, and data collection for all students. For 9th or 10th grade data collections, the Physical Education assessment may be administered in existing physical education classes or as a school-wide 'event' to provide access to the assessment for students who are not currently enrolled in a physical education course. The AOE plans to collect and share examples of high school assessment events from the spring 2018 pilot testing window.

Testing of publicly funded students that attend independent schools will take place at either the independent school they attend, or the funding school. Data from this 2018 field test will be made available to schools, but will not be used for accountability purposes.

What is the assessment window?

The AOE expects schools to administer the assessment within the month of May. (May 1 – 31)

What does the Physical Education assessment assess?

Student performance on each part of the assessment is measured against a Healthy Fitness Zone (HFZ). Students who perform recommended daily physical activity will likely place within the HFZ, when assessed.

What domains of physical fitness will the Vermont Physical Education assessment measure?

The AOE has selected four domains of the FitnessGram system to be used in accountability: aerobic capacity, abdominal muscular strength and endurance, upper body muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility. The FitnessGram measurement of Body Composition will not be required. However, schools may decide to use other parts of the assessment that are not part of the AOE requirements, but the AOE will only collect data from those that are required. The Brockport modifications and accommodations will measure these same four domains.

Which FitnessGram and Brockport protocols will students take?

FitnessGram and Brockport provide a variety of options for measuring each of the four required domains. Schools may select the options that work best for their students and may use these options to meet the individual needs of students from special populations. FitnessGram includes ten assessments that measure aerobic capacity, abdominal and upper body muscular strength/endurance, and flexibility. Brockport offers modifications and accommodations to the FitnessGram protocols to provide access to students who are not able to participate in the FitnessGram protocols.

Determining which protocols a school can use to test students depends on what facilities/equipment are available to collect fitness data for aerobic capacity, abdominal and upper body muscular strength/endurance, and flexibility. To calibrate testing, the facilities/equipment that a school plans to use for testing must be authentic; for example, a measured quarter-mile track for the mile run or walk, a U.S. Games modified pull-up bar for modified pull-up test, a safe accessible chin-up bar for flexed-arm hang. A grant has been secured to provide each SU/SD with two standard flexibility testers (sit-and-reach box), curl-up strips, and assessment cue cards. The AOE will not cover additional district costs for local assessment choices.

Will there be accommodations and an alternate assessment for students from special populations?

The needs of students from special populations will be addressed in four ways:

- Since there are several task options for each FitnessGram domain, schools may find one that will work best for students with a special assessment need.

- Modified tasks can be selected from the Brockport Assessment, a companion to FitnessGram that includes tasks and Healthy Fitness Zone standards for four groups of students with specific assessment needs.
- Using information gathered during the 2018 pilot, the AOE will identify student groups whose needs are not met by the Brockport Assessment. The AOE will work with an advisory group to develop additional options for those students.
- The AOE will develop an alternate assessment for students who cannot participate in a fitness assessment even with the three options outlined above.

The 2018 pilot will be used to determine the accessibility and technical validity of these activities, with field feedback being used to inform revisions in preparation for a 2018-19 rollout.

How will we submit Student performance data?

Student performance data will be submitted through two ways:

- The FitnessGram online software
- For the students needing modification and accommodations using the Brockport, along with students who are not able to access the assessment in 2018, performance and participation data will be submitted directly to the AOE through a secure online form.

Unlike Vermont's other statewide assessments, schools may not apply for a health exemption in the 2018 pilot, but rather submit non-participating student information through the secure online form, along with reasons why the student was unable to participate. This information will be used by the PE Advisory Panel to develop the Alternate Assessment for 2018/2019. In the future Medical Exemptions will be made available if a physician certifies that participation in the assessment may pose a health risk for the student.

Will schools be expected to purchase a license to use FitnessGram software?

The AOE will cover the cost of FitnessGram licenses in two ways:

- Schools that **do not have** a current license - the AOE will purchase a new license for the school.
- Schools **that have** a current FitnessGram license - The Cooper Institute will reimburse schools a prorated amount for the previously purchased license. Once the AOE submits payment to Cooper for the license cost Cooper will reimburse the district for the unused portion of the license. **NOTE:** This will only cover costs of districts that purchased a FitnessGram license on their own. It does not cover costs of districts that are funded through one of FitnessGram's grant partners (e.g., PYFP, NFL).

What is the timeline for license distribution, educator training, and rollout of this assessment?

- January 2018: FitnessGram Licenses will be distributed to schools.
- January-April 2018: The AOE will provide regional training in the administration of FitnessGram, the flow of data, and the FitnessGram Companion Assessment Plan.
- May 2018: The assessment will be pilot-tested with all publically funded students in the 4th and 7th grades. For the 2018 pilot year, SU/SDs have the option of collecting high school level data from either all 9th students **or** all 10th grade students.

- May 2019: The assessment will be administered to all Vermont publically funded 4th, 7th, and high school students at one identified grade level. Data from this administration will be used for accountability purposes.

What will the Training include?

Fitnessgram and the AOE will provide guidance to schools as they set up any infrastructure necessary to administer and record this assessment locally. The trainings will be based on a “trainer of trainers” model, and schools will be asked to send teams that include individuals that will take responsibility for three key elements of assessment implementation:

1. test administration (typically physical education teachers),
2. test administration for special populations (typically special educators), and
3. data entry (typically district testing administrators or IT specialists).

District Test Administrators and Special Education Coordinators are also being invited to these trainings for an overview of the policy and procedures that underpin the assessment, but may opt to send a designee to participate in this important discussion.

My school is already using FitnessGram- what happens to our current assessment data?

Existing student assessment data will be retained and carried over. The FitnessGram interface will also look identical to what it looks like now; schools currently using FitnessGram will most likely only need to make minimal adjustments to current practice going forward.

Can a school use another PE assessment instead of FitnessGram to meet the ESSA requirement?

No, all schools will be required to use FitnessGram and Brockport as a statewide assessment, beginning in 2017-18. Schools wishing to supplement that assessment with additional tools can do so, as long as they also use FitnessGram and Brockport as required by the AOE.

What should schools be doing now to prepare for the new PE assessment?

The most important thing is for schools to ensure that students have opportunities to address Standard 3 of the Vermont Physical Education Standards - this will give kids the chance to be physically active and develop their fitness. In addition, schools should start preparing for administration by: Send individuals to AOE trainings and support offered through May 2018.

Where and when will assessment updates be released?

Assessment updates will be announced through the AOE’s [Weekly Field Memo](#), the *Vermont Assessment and Linking Health & Learning* newsletters, and be posted on [Vermont’s Comprehensive Assessment Program Portal](#) and [Physical Education webpages](#).

Who should I contact with my questions about this assessment?

- For information about the assessment content and related classroom practice, contact Susan Yesalonia, Physical Education Specialist, at susan.yesalonia@vermont.gov.
- For information about test administration and school accountability, contact Gabriel McGann, Statewide Assessment Coordinator, at gabriel.mcgann@vermont.gov.
- For information about the FG Companion Assessments, contact Linda Moreno, Assessment Coordinator for Special Populations, at linda.moreno@vermont.gov.