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Vermont Physical Education Assessment: Policies and Guidelines

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) has adopted FitnessGram and the Brockport Physical Fitness test, which in combination will comprise Vermont's Physical Education Assessment (VTPEA) for state and federal accountability purposes. This FAQ provides introductory information about the assessment, timelines for implementation, and the respective roles that the Agency of Education and school personnel will play in implementing this new component of the state accountability system.

Why is Vermont introducing a common Physical Education Assessment into the state's 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, Brockport, and an alternate assessment that will be added in 2019 will be used to collect data, and the results will support state and local educators in promoting healthy, active student lifestyles.

What comprises the Physical Education Assessment?

The Vermont Physical Education Assessment is made up of FitnessGram, the Brockport Physical Fitness Test, and a soon to be developed Alternate Physical Education Assessment for students who are unable to access FitnessGram or Brockport because of physical or cognitive disabilities. FitnessGram is a comprehensive health-related fitness assessment developed by The Cooper Institute, and is currently the most widely used fitness assessment for youth in the nation. The principal mission of FitnessGram is to promote lifelong physical activity among youth. The Brockport Physical Fitness Test was developed as a companion to the FitnessGram assessment for students in five specific disability categories, see below for further description.

Which students will be assessed?

The assessment will be administered to all publicly funded students in the 4th and 7th grade and for the 2018 pilot year, schools have the option of collecting high school data from either all 9th grade students **or** all 10th grade students. The only exception is for students with documented health or medical issues that would prevent a student from participating in physical activity. 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 the independent school the students attend and is the responsibility of the Independent 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 requires all schools enrolling publicly funded students in grades 4, 7 and 9 or 10 to administer the assessment within the month of May beginning in 2018. (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/Adapted Fitness Zone (HFZ/AFZ) standard that is based on the student's age and gender. Students who perform recommended daily physical activity will likely place within the HFZ/AFZ when assessed.

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

The AOE has selected four domains of FitnessGram 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 integrate FitnessGram and Brockport into their local Physical Education curriculum and may use other parts of the assessment that are not part of the AOE requirements. The AOE will only collect data from those domains that are required and will not have access to the data that is collected locally.

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 muscular strength and endurance, upper body muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility. The Brockport assessment measures these same four domains using modified tasks and AFZ standards for five student groups who often are unable to participate in the array of FitnessGram tasks and standards. These disability categories are: Blind/Visually Impaired, Cerebral Palsy, Intellectual Disability, Congenital Anomalies or Amputation, and Spinal Cord Injuries.

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. The AOE will not cover additional 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 one of four ways:

1. Matching FitnessGram task options to individual student needs
2. Matching FitnessGram task options to individual student needs AND providing accommodations
3. Using the Brockport modified tasks and Adapted Fitness Zone (AFZ) standards with students from the five target groups
4. Providing the student an alternate assessment of health-based fitness

Since there are several task options for each FitnessGram domain, schools may find one that will work best for students in need of a special assessment. For example, a student with a physical disability may be able to demonstrate flexibility with the limbs that are not affected by the disability. Students may also be able to complete the standard FitnessGram tasks with the addition of an accommodation. For example, a student with autism may be able to complete the mile run aerobic capacity task when accompanied by an adult proctor. It is important to note that a list of approved accommodations and the model for providing an alternate assessment are both under development and will be informed by a post assessment school-based survey during the spring 2018 pilot testing. School personnel are strongly encouraged to complete the survey that will be included with the data submission (see below).

Please note that even though a student from one of the Brockport target groups may be able to complete one but not all the FitnessGram tasks, it is not necessary or advisable to combine scores and tasks from the two programs. Brockport includes all the tasks listed in FitnessGram plus the additional set of modified tasks. The real advantage, however, is that the AFZ standards for all the tasks in Brockport, were developed for the specific target groups rather than the general population, with specific attention to interactions between the disability and physical activity.

How will we submit student performance data?

Student performance data will be submitted in two ways:

- The FitnessGram online software
- For the students assessed using 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 will 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 Physical Education Advisory Panel to develop the Alternate Assessment for 2018/2019. In the future medical exemptions will be available following the same procedures we use with all of Vermont's assessments.

Alternate Assessment Development

A Physical Education Advisory Panel has convened to help develop the future Alternate PE Assessment for 2018/2019 VTPEA administration. To help facilitate this process and understand the constellation of needs of Vermont students the AOE will send out a PE assessment survey after the completion of the test window to gather information about the Pilot test, and the students who were unable to access the assessment.

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

Schools will not need to purchase a license to use FitnessGram. The AOE will cover the cost of FitnessGram licenses in two ways:

- Public schools that **do not have** a current license - the AOE will purchase a new license for the school.
- Public 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 about independent schools?

Independent schools are required to test all publicly funded Vermont students in 4th, 7th and 9th or 10th grade, and will receive access to the FitnessGram online software through a dedicated independent school license. Due to size, the four large independent academies have their own school licenses. It will be necessary for the independent school leadership to designate an certify individual(s) with experience implementing and supervising physical activities to administer the VTPEA. The AOE will add the designated individual(s) to the FitnessGram license, and the designated individual(s) will be able to add their publicly funded students into the software and administer that assessment.

Independent schools may only test publicly funded students in 4th, 7th, and 9th or 10th grade under this license. If the school desires to test privately funded students, they must purchase a separate license.

Who can administer the Vermont Physical Education Assessment?

All of Vermont’s statewide assessments should be administered by individuals who are qualified, meaning that all test administrators have completed recommended training and know how to provide students with a productive assessment experience that produces an accurate estimate of students’ skills and abilities. In the case of the Physical Education Assessment, an additional priority is that test administrators follow rules and procedures that ensure students’ safety and well-being.

The following are guidelines for determining who is qualified to administer the Vermont Physical Education Assessment:

	Preferred	Required
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Credentials	Licensed physical education teacher, or Equivalent (e.g., adaptive physical education teacher, Physical Therapist, or Occupational Therapist	An individual, designated and certified by school leadership, who has skill and experience organizing and supervising physical activities and events.
Training	An individual who has successfully completed test administrator training for FitnessGram and/or the Brockport Physical Fitness Test, provide by a licensed professional who completed the Agency of Education’s “Trainer of Trainers” workshop.	An individual, designated and certified by school leadership, who has read the FitnessGram and/or Brockport test administration manuals, completed online modules and training tutorials, or has attended the Agency’s regional trainings.
Student Safety	Licensed Physical Educator or Equivalent who is fully trained in physical education safety guidelines and precautions, knows when to terminate an activity that may present a health risk to a student, and in the case of the Brockport Assessment, has knowledge of the unique characteristics of a student’s disability that determine what physical activities a student can and can’t do safely.	An individual, designated and certified by school leadership, who has prior experience monitoring physical activities for individuals or groups of student, and who has demonstrated the ability to maintain safety guidelines and precautions. The individual must also be fully aware of any specific health risks presented by individual students, particularly for administering the Brockport Assessment to students from special populations.

Please note that the word “certified” used in the Required column above refers to the [“District Test Administrator’s Certification of Proper Test Administration”](#) which includes a space to indicate that assessment administrators are fully trained and qualified. This form will be forwarded to the AOE upon completion of the assessment. The form must be completed by both public schools and independent schools.

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

- January 2018: FitnessGram Licenses will be activated.~~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. Log on credentials will be disseminated to District Test Administrators (DA) from each district after attending in person or online trainings.
- May 2018: The assessment will be pilot-tested with all publicly funded students in the 4th and 7th grades. For the 2018 pilot year, public schools and independent schools will have the option of collecting high school level data from either all 9th grade students **or** all 10th grade students.
- May 2019: The assessment will be administered to all Vermont publicly funded 4th, 7th, and high school students at one identified grade level determined by the AOE. Data from this administration will be used for accountability purposes.

What will the training include?

The AOE will provide guidance to schools as they set up any infrastructure necessary to administer and record this assessment locally. The in-person 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 invited to these trainings for an overview of the policy and procedures that support the assessment, but may opt to send a designee to participate in this important discussion.

To provide access for all schools, online options are being posted (see below) to cover all areas of training:

- [Part I: Introduction to the VT PE Assessment](#)
 - understanding the Vermont Physical Education Assessment’s history and policy background
- [Part II: Administration of the FitnessGram protocols/activities](#)
- [Part III: FitnessGram Software training](#)
 - access and administration of the FitnessGram assessment using the [online FitnessGram software](#)
- Part IV: [administration the Brockport Physical Fitness test](#) for students with disabilities (more coming soon)
- [Part V: FitnessGram 101](#)
 - Once PE Assessment administrators ave gone through the training modules, they will then access the [FG 101 certification test](#). Upon passing the FG 101 test with at least 80% correct, they will be provided with a certificate of completion to submit to their DA for recognition of completing the training requirements.

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 physical education 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.

How should Transgender and Gender Nonconforming students be entered into the software?

The assessment's policy regarding gender and the VTPEA assessment falls in line with the AOE's previously released guidance regarding the [Best Practices for Schools regarding Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students](#) that includes the following:

"Best Practices require schools to adopt a student-centered focus regarding transgender and gender nonconforming students."

"Transgender and gender nonconforming students are to be provided the same opportunities to participate in physical education as are all other students. Generally, students should be permitted to participate in physical education and sports in accordance with the student's gender identity"

This is an important yet difficult question to answer for FitnessGram and Brockport because the fitness standards were based on health and fitness data gathered specifically for male and female students. This being the case, to have a student-centered focus it would be most appropriate to allow the student to choose the gender they wish to use for this assessment. Using this approach, it will be important to assure students that they are not being asked which gender they most associate with, but rather if they would prefer to be compared to males or females, as the gender field must be entered as either male or female when entering student data. It may be comforting to some students who may not feel comfortable with any gender label, that gender is not reported on any of the student reports that FitnessGram publishes.

For additional information on this topic, please see the [official guidance from FitnessGram](#).

What should schools be doing now to prepare for the new Physical Education 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 students the chance to be physically active and develop their fitness. In addition, schools should start preparing for assessment administration by sending 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 FitnessGram companion assessments, contact Linda Moreno, Assessment Coordinator for Special Populations, at linda.moreno@vermont.gov.