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FAQ: Vermont's New Statewide Physical Education Assessment

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) has recently adopted FitnessGram as its statewide physical education assessment for state and federal accountability purposes. This FAQ provides introductory information about the assessment. Additional details around the implementation of this assessment will be finalized in October; at that time, this document will be revised accordingly.

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

Vermont has articulated a commitment to approaches to education and evaluation that support the whole child, and, within the Education Quality Standards, to the assessment of Physical Education (PE) in particular. We also know that healthier students perform better in every other aspect of school, and believe that PE assessment results will support state and local educators in promoting healthy, active student lifestyles.

What is the FitnessGram assessment?

FitnessGram is a non-competitive fitness assessment developed in 1982 by The Cooper Institute, and is currently the most widely used fitness assessment tool nationally.

How is student performance measured within FitnessGram?

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

What will Vermont measure when looking at physical fitness?

FitnessGram is divided into multiple components that can be assessed together or independently. The components that Vermont will be using will be identified in October, but, at this time, the AOE anticipates assessing students' Aerobic Capacity, Muscular Strength, Muscular Endurance, and Flexibility. A measurement of Body Mass Index, or BMI, will not be a part of the statewide PE assessment.

What grade levels will be assessed, and when will assessments take place?

Specific grade levels to be assessed and the window for testing within the school year will be determined in October. At this time, the AOE anticipates that the test will be administered at the upper elementary, middle, and high school levels.

How much time will FitnessGram take to administer?

The specific amount of classroom time required to administer this assessment will be determined in October. At this time, the AOE anticipates that total administration time will take no more than 1-2 instructional hours for each student, annually.

When will the PE Assessment be formally introduced into schools?

FitnessGram will be field tested statewide in the 2017-18 school year. It will be formally incorporated into the state's accountability system beginning in 2018-19.

How will FitnessGram software be paid for?

The AOE will identify and coordinate funding for schools' FitnessGram licenses.

My school is already using FitnessGram. What will happen to our current assessment data?

Existing student data will be retained and carried over into the statewide system. The FitnessGram interface will also look identical or near-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?

All schools will be required to use FitnessGram, beginning in 2017-18. Schools can supplement that assessment with additional tools, as desired.

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

At this time, schools don't need to take action, and can wait for more information from the AOE. Once assessment testing modules, grade bands, and testing windows have been identified, that information will be shared. The AOE will also coordinate a statewide FitnessGram field test in 2017-18, with a focus on ensuring that local, FitnessGram, and state data systems are working together properly.

Where and when will assessment updates be released?

Additional assessment information will be rolled out during the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) Vermont conference at the Killington Grand Conference Center, in Killington, Vermont, on October 20, 2017. Immediately following the conference, information will be posted to the AOE website, and announced through the AOE's Weekly Field Memo and educator listservs.

Who should I contact with my questions about this assessment?

- For information about the content assessment content and related classroom practice, contact Susan Yesalonia, PE Content Specialist, at susan.yesalonia@vermont.gov.
- For information about test administration and school accountability, contact Michael Hock, Director of Educational Assessment, at michael.hock@vermont.gov.