## Statewide Physical Fitness Testing and Students with Disabilities in Texas

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The importance of health fitness for our students' *quality of life* is clearly a focus of the State of Texas through the passage of Senate Bill 530. According to this law "a school district annually shall assess the physical fitness of students in grades 3 to 12. A school district is not required to assess a student for whom, as a result of disability or other condition identified by commissioner rule, the assessment instrument adopted under Section 38.102 is inappropriate" (Texas Education Agency, 2007, §38.101). The first step to determine the present health status of *all* our students in grades 3 to 12 is to determine their present level of physical fitness. In Texas the *FITNESSGRAM* (Cooper Institute, 2007) has been selected as the statewide fitness test to be used. Although Senate Bill 530 states that a district is not required to assess a student for whom the instrument is inappropriate, it is our contention, based on No Child Left Behind (2001) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), that an alternative assessment *must* be used unless there is a written medical exemption.

As in the statewide assessment in math, science, and social studies, there are a few students who are disabled that may require an *alternative* assessment method to be used and even a smaller number who would be *exempt*. A general *rule of thumb* would be an estimated 3% or less of the special education school population may require alternative assessments in these academic areas as stated above (Council of Exceptional Children, 2007). We are making the assumption that the 3% figure or less also is appropriately related to physical fitness assessment.

The *FITNESSGRAM* only provides one alternative test (i.e., Brockport Physical Fitness Test, Winnick & Short, 1999); however, there are numerous other assessment instruments that can be used depending on the students' strengths and weaknesses.

The following are some examples of alternative forms of evaluations. These examples can be placed on a continuum from (a) those that are *FITNESSGRAM*-like with standards, (b) those with *FITNESSGRAM*-type test items but no standards, and (c) those without *FITNESSGRAM* items but authentic tasks used in daily life requiring a minimal level of motor skills and physical fitness that may or may not have standards. In a very few cases, students with confirmed written medical contraindications may be exempt from physical fitness testing. Each category along the continuum is illustrated in the following figure. For a more extensive explanation of the different forms of evaluation, the reader is referred to the second edition of the *Texas Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance Adapted Physical Education Manual of Best Practices: Administrative Guidelines & Policies* (Silliman-French, accepted), Jansma (1999), or Horvat, Kelly, and Block (2007). For inservice training on any of these assessments or assessment opportunities, please contact Diane Everett, diana@tahperd.org, Executive Director for the Texas Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance.

## FITNESSGRAM (Cooper Institute, 2007) CA = 5 to 17 years and older Scores = Need to do a minimum of 6 of the items listed below. Items = PACER, One-mile run, Walk test, Skinfold measure, Body Mass Index, Curl-up, Trunk lift, 90% Push-up, Pull-up, Modified pull-up, Flexed arm hang, Back-saver sit and reach, and Shoulder stretch. Standardized for individuals without disabilities (use if appropriate for students with disabilities). Alternative Medical Waiver: Exempt (1% of students and up to 2% (Occurrence is Rare) additional with approval) **Brockport Physical Fitness Test** (Winnick & Short, 1999) **Authentic Assessments** Project Transition (Jansma, Ersing, & McCubbin, 1986) CA = 10 to 17 years Standing, Walking, Lifting body parts, Tolerance for sitting/standing, CA = 3 to 18 years Scores = Need to administer a minimum of 4 to 6 of Fundamental cardiorespiratory fitness, the items listed below. Reach, Grasp, Dexterity, and Items = Flexed knee sit-up (arms Positioning. crossed), Lower back and Items = *FITNESSGRAM* items and Target aerobic hamstring flexibility, Abdominal movement test, Reverse curl, Seated push-up, 40-m Suggested assessments (fitness-like strength/endurance, Bench press, Push/Walk, W/C ramp test, Hand weight press, Bench items from these tests): Peabody II and Sit and reach. press, Grip strength, Isometric push-up, Extended arm (Folio & Fewell, 2000), Brigance hang, Trunk lift, Modified curl-up, Target stretch test, (1999), Project MOBILITEE Criterion referenced and originally Modified Apley test, and Thomas test. (Rudolph & Arnhold, 1981), and designed for individuals with MATP (Special Olympics severe intellectual disabilities. Standardized for students with Intellectual Disabilities. International, 2002). Spinal Cord Injuries, Cerebral Palsy, Visual Impairments, Congenital Anomalies, or Amputations.

Figure 1. Continuum of suggested *alternative* assessments if the *FITNESSGRAM* is not appropriate.

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