

## 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](mailto:diana@tahperd.org), Executive Director for the Texas Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance.

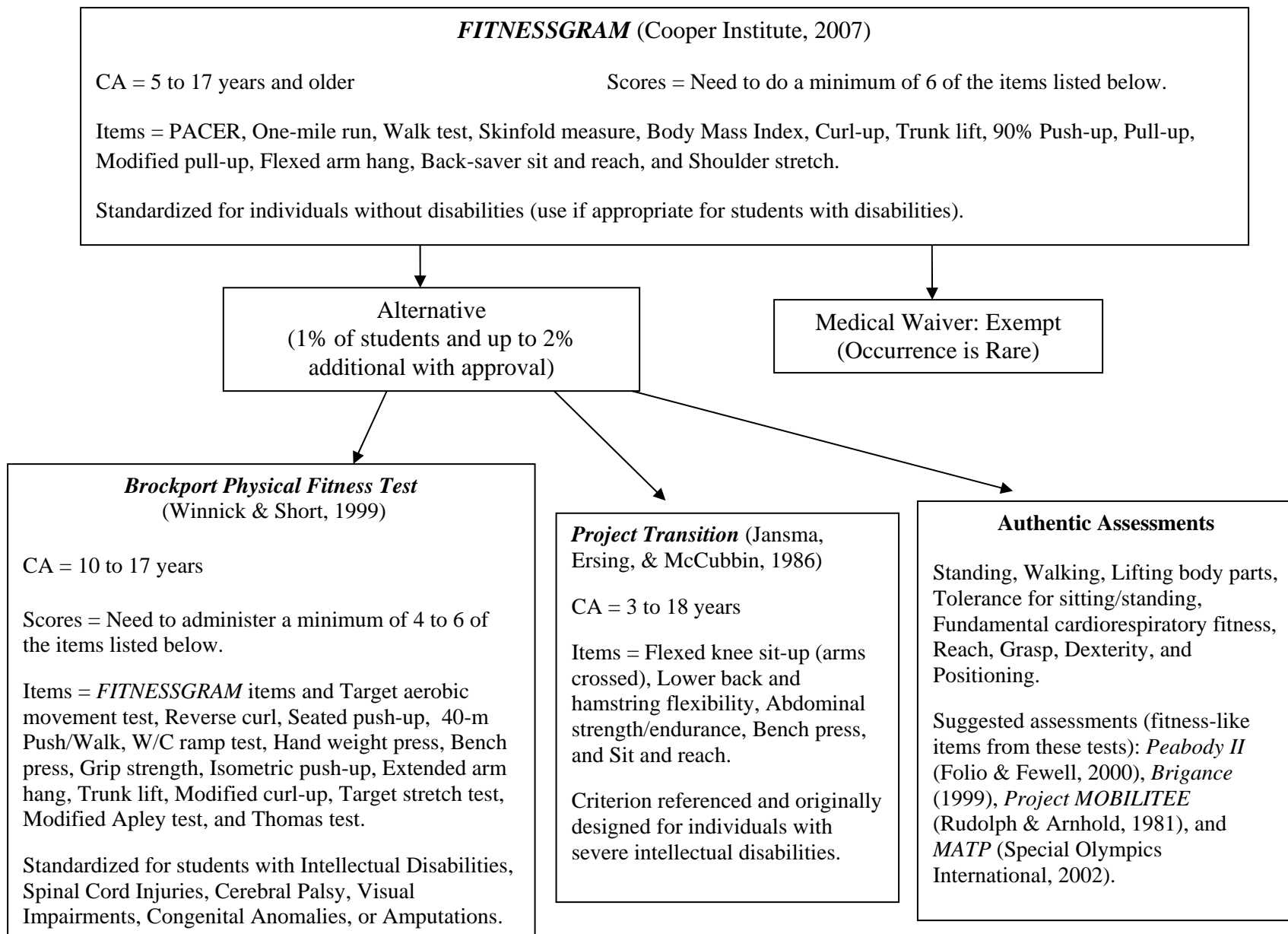


Figure 1. Continuum of suggested *alternative* assessments if the *FITNESSGRAM* is not appropriate.

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