

LCAS APPENDIX B – PHYSICAL EDUCATION/HEALTH

Assessment Summaries, Strengths, and Limitations

The tables below offer information, observations, and recommendations regarding the purpose and implementation of Health and Physical Education assessments utilized at the local level (provider, school, district, supervisory union). This resource is included to further support supervisory unions/districts (SU/SDs) in the provision of local comprehensive assessment systems (please see the AOE’s Strengthening and Streamlining Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems: Guidelines and Support for Leadership Teams for additional information) and to meet the goals of [Act 173 of 2018](#).

This document is intended to provide a high-level overview of a sampling of assessments, including assessments known to be in use by SU/SDs in Vermont, to support local systems and schools in making informed decisions and investment requests. This appendix is not an exhaustive list, does not represent the full breadth and depth of information about the included assessments, and is **not an endorsement of the assessments reviewed**. LEAs are encouraged to evaluate assessments before purchasing or utilizing an assessment. For guidance on how to evaluate assessments, please refer to the Agency’s [LCAS Defining Essential Components](#).

Health and Physical Education Assessments

The state no longer uses the VT-PEA, FitnessGram assessment and instead supports supervisory unions/school districts in the development of their own localized Physical Education assessments (see [Memo: 2022 Physical Education Assessments and FitnessGram](#)). The Agency of Education (AOE) will be working with educators in 2024 to develop model Physical Education performance assessments (Elementary, Middle, and High School) after the new SHAPE Physical Education standards are released in 2024. The AOE will be convening a group of health educators in 2024, to begin developing state-level model performance assessments for this subject as well. There are many great Health and Physical Education assessment tools/resources available and used in Vermont, but there are a limited number of assessments that would meet a high research-backed/tested standard.

Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information, please contact:
Ian Burfoot-Rochford, Student Pathways Division, at ian.burfoot-rochford@vermont.gov

Assessment Name:	<u>FitnessGram™</u>
Type/ Purpose/ Uses:	<p><i>Type:</i> Formative Assessment</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> The purpose of this assessment is to determine a student’s fitness level.</p> <p><i>Uses:</i> This assessment can be used to support students’ individual assessments of personal wellness and data from this assessment can be used by students to build fitness goals. This assessment does not measure learning or knowledge and, therefore, cannot be used as a measure of student proficiency in Physical Education.</p>
Summary of Tool/ Assessment:	<p>FitnessGram is a health-related fitness assessment developed by The Cooper Institute. FitnessGram assesses students in aerobic ability, body composition, and muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility, providing several test protocols in each of these areas (e.g., PACER). Scores are evaluated against criterion-referenced standards – referred to as the HealthyFitness Zone (HFZ) standards. The FitnessGram software generates personalized reports that identify student fitness levels in the assessed areas; these reports are made available to teachers, students, and parents.</p>
Evidence and/or Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FitnessGram test protocols are valid and reliable for what they measure (<u>Morrow, 2010</u>). • The HealthyFitness Zone standards use cut-off parameters that are not updated regularly (at time of this publication) and, therefore, are unresponsive to changing health data patterns. The validity of these standards (i.e., ability to determine what cut off scores are related to what levels of health) may, in turn, change year to year (<u>Fraser, 2021</u>; <u>Lee et al., 2020</u>). • The HealthyFitness Zone Standards are based on averaged/normed data trends. In the student/youth data that were used to create these criterion standards (cut-offs) there were, in turn, a number of students that would have scored at Needs Improvement on the FitnessGram, but were still healthy as measured by other indicators of health (<u>Lee et al., 2020</u>; <u>Rolo, 2022</u>). In general, these fitness categories have been criticized for elevating certain “bodies” while commonly labelling others as “at-risk.” Transgender youth, specifically, have reported negative experiences with the FitnessGram assessment (<u>Plum & Gard, 2015</u>; <u>Safron et al., 2022</u>). • The relationship between Body Composition measures, like those used in the FitnessGram (BMI), and future health outcomes is under debate (<u>Medvedyuk, 2017</u>). There are many confounding factors that are at play (e.g., poverty, lifestyle factors, etc.) when analyzing how BMI relates to health (<u>Caprio, 2008</u>).

Assessment Name:	FitnessGram™
Technical Specifications:	FitnessGram software offers the opportunity to track FitnessGram Assessment data and provides resources to assist with testing administration (FitnessGram). There are also other assessment/tracking tools that come with a FitnessGram license. For information on technical use of the FitnessGram protocols, tools, and software view My Healthy Zone.
Strengths:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools may select the test protocol options that work best to meet the individual needs of students. • The underlying data/scores (not HealthyZone categories) from the aerobic and muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility assessment protocols can be readily used by students to establish personal goals/fitness plans. • Parent/student reports can be printed in Spanish.
Limitations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HealthyZone categories should not be a sole measurement of an individual’s level of fitness. • Health has multiple components. Data gathered from these protocols should be considered within a holistic understanding of student health (e.g., mental health). • “Young children do not respond to training. For that reason, the FitnessGram test protocols ask that students in grades 3 and below begin to learn form and protocols but not participate in fitness testing.” (SHAPE, 2017, p. 5)
Recommendation(s):	It is important to note that quality physical education serves purposes beyond physical fitness. Physical educators are trained in a number of areas and are educators, not simply “fitness instructors” (Landi et al., 2021). Fitness scores, while part of a potential measure of an individual’s health, will not provide insights as to the health behaviors an individual practices nor their potential for maintaining healthy habits after graduating high school (which is an important focus of Physical Education standards). The FitnessGram can, in turn, be used as a teaching tool to support students’ personal evaluation of fitness, and the student can use assessment data to set fitness goals (without a need to reference HealthyZones). It is, however, important to clearly identify the strengths and limitations of this assessment with students in its use.