

FITNESSGRAM®

Exemptions for Students with Disabilities

The Texas Education Code (TEC) and the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) permit an exemption for students with disabilities from participating in the physical fitness assessment.

A student can be completely or partially exempted from FITNESSGRAM® assessments based on the conditions of their disability. There is no requirement to indicate these exemptions in the software or report them to the Texas Education Agency. If the student completes some, but not all, of the test items based on a restriction from particular types of physical activity, the scores for the completed tests should be entered into the FITNESSGRAM® software. Test items that are not completed should be left blank. NOTE: Blank entries will not count against a student or a school's overall percentages. The agency will only see aggregated data that reflects test items that were completed. To protect confidentiality, there will be no indication of test items not completed for a specific student.

All students, regardless of a disability, should be included in the physical fitness assessment. Modifying the test items when necessary to provide an opportunity for students to participate in a safe and relevant manner is recommended, but the data resulting from these modifications should not be entered into the software or submitted to the agency. If the modification for the student changes the test in a way that it would be unfair to judge the student against the regular FITNESSGRAM® standards, it would be inappropriate to enter the scores. It is recommended that the district maintain this information.

Questions and Answers:

1. Does this mean that all students with disabilities are exempt from the FITNESSGRAM®?

No. The majority of students with disabilities will be able to participate in the FITNESSGRAM® without accommodations or modifications to the assessment. Only students (with or without disabilities) who have been "restricted" in accordance with TAC Sec. 74.31, are exempt from participation in the administration of the FITNESSGRAM®.

Sec. 74.31. Health Classifications for Physical Education.

For physical education, a district must classify each student, on the basis of health, into one of the following categories.

- (1) Unrestricted (not limited in activities).
- (2) Restricted (excludes the more vigorous activities).
 - (A) Permanent. A member of the healing arts licensed to practice in Texas must provide the school written documentation concerning the nature of the impairment and the expectations for physical activity for the student.
 - (B) Temporary. The student may be restricted from physical activity of the physical education class. A member of the healing arts licensed to practice in Texas must provide the school written documentation concerning the nature of the temporary impairment and the expected amount of time for recovery. During recovery time, the student must continue to learn the concepts of the lessons but may not actively participate in the skill demonstration.
- (3) Adapted and remedial (specific activities prescribed or prohibited, as directed by a member of the healing arts licensed to practice in Texas).

2. What actions should a school take when a student can participate in the FITNESSGRAM® when provided appropriate accommodations or modifications to the assessment?

School personnel should exercise good judgment when including students with disabilities. If the student is considered "unrestricted" in accordance with TAC Sec. 74.31, the student must be administered the FITNESSGRAM® in the same manner as any other students. If the student with disabilities is participating in the regular physical fitness assessments without accommodations and/or modifications, there is no need to a meeting of the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee. However, if school personnel and/or the parent believe the student will require certain accommodations/modifications to participate, then an ARD committee may need to be convened to consider any such accommodation/modifications to the assessment based on the individual student's disability. ARD committee should consider participation in FITNESSGRAM® in the same manner as they consider other required state assessments.

3. What if an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee determines that some items in the FITNESSGRAM® are not appropriate for individual students with a disability?

The student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) should include a statement explaining why the student cannot participate in the test items that are determined by the ARD committee to be inappropriate.

4. What if a student's disability is of sufficient severity to make it dangerous or impossible for the student to participate in any portion of the FITNESSGRAM®?

For some students with significant disabilities the FITNESSGRAM® assessment will be inappropriate. Documentation for excluding the student should be maintained by the district.

5. If a student has already been determined by an ARD to have restricted physical education/activity, is it necessary to have the ARD go back to make a determination regarding FITNESSGRAM® participation?

If the ARD committee has already outlined a student's restriction from physical activity to address the existing curriculum requirements, and the guidance is sufficient to address the physical fitness assessment, there is no need for the ARD to meet to address this specific issue.

***** There are no other permissible exemptions for this state regulation. It is critical that those administering the assessment communicate the importance of student health. To merely state that it is a requirement, without teaching the value of the assessment, will potentially lead to student disinterest and parent discontent.**

6. Are there methods to garner support from students and parents?

- Share with students and parents that the data will be utilized to improve curriculum, direct resources, and provide opportunities for students to improve their own health.
- Send a letter home to parents to communicate the requirements and the importance of this initiative before the test is facilitated.
- Share the "parent report" and "student report" (both generated by the software at no cost) to the parents when the assessment is complete.
- Share research articles with both students and parents that describe positive effects on students who are healthy, such as improved performance, concentration, and attendance rates.
- Host an assembly for students and/or a family fitness night to share the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and demonstrate test protocols.

[TEC § 38.101. ASSESSMENT REQUIRED.](#)

[TAC §74.31. Health Classifications for Physical Education.](#)

[TAC §103.1001](#)

[Occupations Code §104.002. HEALING ART.](#)

[Occupations Code §104.003. REQUIRED IDENTIFICATION.](#)

Districts are encouraged to consider the guidance from the Texas Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (TAHPERD) regarding adaptive physical education as indicated by ARD committee recommendations. This guidance is available at:

http://www.tahperd.org/web/Online/About_us/Adapted_Physical_Education.aspx