

Athletic Placement Process for Interscholastic Athletic Programs

Frequently Asked Questions

Background

Commissioner's Regulation §135.4(c)(7)(ii) governs interscholastic athletic competition for students in grades 7 through 12. This regulation also addresses the process for students competing outside of their usual grade-level classification (e.g., participating on Freshman, Junior Varsity or Varsity).

Local boards of education may choose to permit students to compete outside of their usual grade-level classification; if they do, they must implement the Athletic Placement Process (APP) to determine a student's readiness.

Effective July 29, 2026, amendments to [Commissioner's regulation 135.4](#) revised the APP. The amendments eliminate the physiological maturity assessment (e.g., Tanner Sexual Maturity Rating), revises the student-readiness criteria, and codify several existing APP procedures directly into regulation.

General Information

1. What is the Athletic Placement Process?

The APP is a standardized process originally approved by the Board of Regents in 1980.

A board of education may elect to use APP to permit:

- a student in grade 7 or 8 to compete on a senior high school team; or
- a student in grades 9 through 12 to compete on a team for grades no lower than seventh.

APP applies only to the limited number of students who may benefit from competing at another level.

Districts may not use APP to:

- fill roster vacancies;
- provide extra playing opportunities;
- replace a modified athletic program; or
- reward a student.

2. Must school districts offer APP?

No.

School districts are not required to permit students to compete outside of their usual grade-level classification, therefore, participation in the APP remains optional, and each board of education determines whether the district will offer the APP.

3. Does the amendment change the purpose of APP?

No.

APP continues to provide a process for determining whether a student can compete safely at a different level.

The amendment simply updates the evaluation criteria and incorporates several existing procedures into regulation.

4. Does the amendment change which students may use APP?

No.

The regulation continues to allow:

- students in grades 7 and 8 to compete on senior high school teams; and
- students in grades 9 through 12 to compete on teams for grades no lower than seventh.

Changes to APP

5. What are the specific changes to be aware of?

The amendment makes three changes.

It removes:

- physiological maturity as an APP criterion; and
- use of the Tanner Sexual Maturity Rating.

Codifies existing APP procedures , already used by most districts, into regulation including:

- informed parental consent;
- an invitation requirement for students in grades 7 and 8 to try out; and
- use of the same team-selection criteria for all students who try out for the team.

Updates student-readiness criteria by requiring students to demonstrate sufficient:

- personal and social responsibility;
- sport-specific skill development;
- knowledge of the game; and
- physical fitness.

6. Is the Tanner Sexual Maturity Rating still required?

No.

The amendment removes assessment of physiological maturity (i.e., Tanner Sexual Maturity Rating) from APP.

The Department determined that the Tanner rating is intrusive and does not provide an appropriate measure of injury risk for students competing with older or younger students.

7. Does the amendment remove physical fitness from APP?

No.

Physical fitness remains a required readiness factor.

The amendment requires four readiness factors:

- personal and social responsibility;
- sport-specific skill development;
- knowledge of the game; and
- physical fitness.

The regulation does not prescribe the specific methods or tests districts must use to assess these factors.

8. Is informed parental consent new?

No.

Parent or guardian permission has long been required through the Department's APP guidance. It has now been codified into regulation. Districts must review and update their current forms as needed to ensure compliance.

Invitation, Readiness, and Team Selection

9. Must students in grades 7 and 8 receive an invitation?

Yes.

A student in grades 7 or 8 may try out for a high school team only by invitation of the school or district athletic or physical education director.

While the regulation identifies who is authorized to issue the invitation, it does not prohibit a coach, teacher, parent, or student from asking the director to consider a student. However, a request or recommendation does not replace the required formal invitation.

10. What must a student demonstrate?

The student must demonstrate sufficient:

- personal and social responsibility;
- sport-specific skill development;
- knowledge of the game; and
- physical fitness.

Students participating in the APP process must be evaluated using the same criteria applied to all students trying out for that team to demonstrate these skills. As an example, if a coach determines a back handspring is a requirement for cheerleading and would like an invited student in the APP process to demonstrate that skill, all cheerleaders must also demonstrate the same skill during tryouts. If a coach determines that a 7-minute mile is a requirement for cross-country and would like an invited student in the APP process to demonstrate that skill, all cross-country athletes must also demonstrate that same skill during tryouts.

11. What is meant by personal and social responsibility?

Personal responsibility in athletics means taking ownership of one's actions, decisions, and performance. It includes:

- Self-discipline and self-regulation, including managing time, effort, and behavior to meet personal and team goals.
- Self-reflection and goal setting.
- Respect for rules and commitments including adhering to sportsmanship and competition rules.
- Leadership and initiative.

Social responsibility in athletics focuses on how students interact with others and contribute to a positive team and community environment. It includes:

- Cooperation and teamwork, including working effectively with peers, valuing diverse perspectives, and supporting teammates.
- Communication and empathy.
- Upholding values like fairness, integrity, and respect.

12. Do APP students still need medical clearance?

Yes.

An annual health examination is required for participation in all extra class athletic activities which include the APP. The [NYS School Health Examination Form](#) requires the health care provider's explicit approval for athletic participation.

Students must provide the required health examination before tryouts. As was previously required by policy and now codified in regulation, a student must also provide an updated health history if their health examination was completed more than 30 days before the start of the sports season.

13. What is the role of the director of school health services (a.k.a., medical director) in the revised APP process?

The amended regulation eliminates the requirement for assessment of physiological maturity (i.e., the Tanner Sexual Maturity Rating) in the APP. The amended regulation also eliminates the requirement for the medical director's approval of students' participation in extra class athletic activities, with exceptions as outlined below. Therefore, the medical director plays no role in the APP, as approval to participate in athletics is determined in the mandated annual health exam:

- A student is required to submit proof of a health examination which also states they can participate in athletics. Students must also submit a health history if the exam was conducted more than 30 days before the start of the sports season, or if the exam will expire during the season.

Additional changes to the medical director's role in athletics:

- A medical director still performs health examinations for students upon request or for those who do not provide proof of one conducted by a private health care provider.
- A school medical director may preclude a student with a severe health condition from participation in athletic activities, after consultation with the student's health care provider, if such participation would be detrimental to the student's health and safety.
- The medical director must approve students to resume participation in athletic activities after students are removed from athletics for a potential concussion, or for signs and symptoms of pending or increased risk of cardiac arrest.

14. Does APP invitation guarantee team placement?

No.

The APP invitation allows the student to try out. It does not guarantee a place on the team.

The district must apply the same team-selection criteria to all students who try out for the team.

District Implementation

15. Must districts revise their APP policies and procedures?

Yes.

Districts should review:

- board policies and resolutions;
- APP procedures;
- informed-consent forms;
- invitation procedures;
- Role of the director of school health services (a.k.a., medical director)
- staff roles;
- team-selection procedures;
- recordkeeping; and
- parent communications.

16. What remains unchanged?

The amendment does not change these core features:

- offering APP remains optional; local boards of education determine whether to implement the process.
- Annual health examination and a health history if the health examination is completed more than 30 days before the start of the season.
- APP may allow eligible students to compete outside their usual grade-level classification.
- Student safety remains central to the process.

17. Does the amendment change the rule for K–8 districts that contract for high school education?

Not substantively. Eligible students in grades 7 and 8 retain the ability to participate in interscholastic athletics at a contracting high school, provided all existing regulatory standards are met.

The existing requirements remain, including:

- Board resolutions from the sending and receiving boards;
- compliance with the APP process;
- selection of one high school during grades 7 and 8; and
- applicability of the one-year sport-specific period of ineligibility that may apply if the student later attends a different contracting high school.