Evidence shows that healthy and fit youth perform better in the classroom. Therefore, it is important for schools to view physical education and the promotion of physical activity as priorities.

Many schools have adopted the Comprehensive Physical Activity Program model to enhance the opportunities for students to be physically active. The foundation upon which Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs are built is quality physical education.

The Presidential Youth Fitness Program (PYFP) was developed to support quality physical education. Designed to be easily integrated into existing physical education curricula, the Presidential Youth Fitness Program helps physical educators enhance their fitness education and assessment process.

The PYFP gives teachers the methodology, instructional strategies, and resources necessary to empower youth to be active and fit. This document describes how.

### Three Core Areas

PYFP is built upon three core areas: professional development for physical educators, the use of a health-related fitness assessment (FITNESSGRAM®), and motivational recognition for students.

#### Area 1: Professional Development

**Importance of Training Teachers**

It is vital that physical educators understand the appropriate ways to incorporate and assess student fitness levels and the resources that can help. Knowing how to use the resulting data to maximize learning and program planning are essential components of curriculum implementation and the delivery of quality instruction. Professional development must help physical educators understand that the purpose of assessing fitness goes beyond running tests, collecting numbers, and distributing certificates.

The professional development provided through PYFP provides physical educators with:

- Key concepts around the continuous improvement model, health-related fitness, the FITT Principle, and instructional strategies to incorporate these concepts into the lesson plan.
- Identification of critical information that needs to be shared with students and parents, and options for delivering information in a secured environment in order to protect student privacy.
- Steps to producing consistent, accurate, and valid data, and use of that data to empower students.
- Behavior change theories and their application to students and adoption of health-enhancing behaviors.
- Instructional strategies to promote student physical activity and fitness and options to recognize students’ fitness and physical activity achievements.

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**The Presidential Youth Fitness Program is aligned to state and national standards in health and physical education and, therefore, supports any standards-based health and PE curriculum.**

**Participation in PYFP helps schools meet the requirements to become a Let’s Move! Active School.**
Area 2: Assessment
Role of Systematic Fitness Evaluation

In order to help students learn how to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness, they must first understand what a healthy level of fitness and physical activity is and where they personally fall in the spectrum of health. That is where a criterion-based, health-related fitness assessment comes into play.

FITNESSGRAM is the adopted assessment of the PYFP. It is a teaching tool physical educators can integrate into instruction as the link between fitness, health, physical activity, and assessment. Specifically, use of a valid, criterion-referenced health-related fitness assessment, such as FITNESSGRAM, can help.

Students:
• learn fitness concepts in a way that is personal to them
• learn about and set goals for improvement
• identify activities they enjoy and the impact on one or more health-related fitness components
• identify specific goals to improve their fitness based on valid assessment feedback

Physical educators:
• meet national physical education Standard 3: student demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness (SHAPE America, 2014)
• teach physical fitness and physical activity concepts including goal setting, data analysis, and tracking progress
• modify instruction using baseline assessment data
• provide data that can help make the case for physical activity and/or fitness programming before, during, and after the school day
• assess student knowledge of health-related fitness concepts
• communicate with
  • students and parents about a student’s current level of health-related fitness and ways to maintain or improve it
  • administrators on the health-related fitness of the student population at a school or district

Administrators:
• allocate resources to support quality physical education programming
• ensure curricular focus on health-enhancing physical activity and fitness education based on objective data
• create awareness among school staff and administrators of the need for quality physical education that includes a comprehensive approach to fitness education
• provide data to justify policies, practices, and services to support fitness education and promote healthy behaviors among children and youth

Area 3: Motivational Recognition
Value of Student Recognition for Goal Setting and Achievement

The Presidential Youth Fitness Program recognizes students for physical activity and fitness achievements, and schools for adhering to the program’s model for fitness education.

PYFP offers a variety of options to recognize student goal setting and achievement for fitness and physical activity behaviors and/or outcomes. Research indicates that the use of student recognition can facilitate interest in a topic not previously of interest and, as a result, help students acquire skills and knowledge that lead to the development of intrinsic motivation (Mehta, 2014). When used to recognize achievement of a criterion (versus being compared to their peers), awards and recognition can enhance students’ task-involvement, future intention, and enjoyment (Domangue and Solmon, 2010).

The PYFP training addresses these points to ensure that the program’s recognition component serves its intended purpose—to develop youth who are active and fit for life.
Best Practices for Presidential Youth Fitness Program Implementation

**Appropriate Use**

The Presidential Youth Fitness Program is intended to be implemented in the context of a quality physical education program. PYFP can help all physical educators, regardless of experience, develop or enhance their fitness education and assessment process. Key to this is ensuring appropriate use of fitness assessment data.

**Inappropriate Use**

Fitness assessment data should not be used to:
- evaluate physical educators’ performance or effectiveness
- compare physical educators’ performance across schools and districts
- grade students
- inform high stakes testing that measures teacher or school performance
- make the sole argument for the importance of physical education
- make causal associations to health outcomes, health behaviors, or academic performance, or
- analyze associations between fitness and other outcomes without considering other variables that influence fitness and the outcome of interest (Figure 1)

![Figure 1. Why Fitness Assessment Data Should Not Be Used to Assign Grades or Rate Teachers](Image)

Fitness is influenced by a number of factors beyond physical activity. These include:
- heredity
- maturation
- age
- nutrition
- environmental conditions (heat, humidity, pollution)
- access to physical activity opportunities
- socioeconomic status
- trainability, or the amount a person is physically capable of improving their own fitness

Source: Corbin, 2009; IOM, 2012

**Conclusion**

PYFP offers schools, districts, and states an opportunity to support fitness education and assessment within a comprehensive, quality physical education program. By adopting the program’s three core components, schools can efficiently and effectively promote, assess, track, report, and recognize youth fitness and physical activity.

If grading students based on the results of their fitness test is inappropriate, then how can their progress and understanding of health-related concepts be measured? Consider age-appropriate knowledge tests that can assess understanding of health-related fitness concepts. The FITNESSGRAM 10 software includes valid and reliable knowledge tests. The six-level knowledge tests assess understanding of health-related components and are available for free through the FITNESSGRAM (FG) Student App. Also available through the FG Student App is AG Lite, a 15-question gamified survey assessing students’ physical activity and sedentary habits at home and school.

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References


