



Champion Fitness. Champion Kids.

Parent Resource Guide
to the Presidential Youth Fitness Program





Dear Parents/Guardians:

Good health, a reduced risk for disease and illness, readiness to learn, and higher self-esteem: these are things you wish for your child, and these are the things the partners of the Presidential Youth Fitness Program (PYFP) are seeking to make reality for students nationwide.

Physical educators have the power to help your child develop the knowledge and skills to improve his or her physical well-being and succeed long after high school graduation. The PYFP partners want to ensure every physical educator has the tools and knowledge to do just that.

This guide is designed to help you understand the importance of fitness education and assessment and the things your child may be doing as a result of the school's participation in the Presidential Youth Fitness Program. Your child's physical education teacher can assist you in understanding what the results mean.

Participating in the Presidential Youth Fitness Program means your child will be empowered to be active and fit for life. We thank you for your support of our efforts to promote the well-being of your child and look forward to helping our nation's schools develop healthy students who are ready to learn.

Sincerely,

Presidential Youth Fitness Program Partners:

Office of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Fitness Foundation
Society of Health and Physical Educators
The Cooper Institute®



THE PRESIDENTIAL YOUTH FITNESS PROGRAM

Our Mission

To provide a model for fitness education that supports teachers and empowers students to adopt an active lifestyle.

Our Background

Launched in September 2012, the Presidential Youth Fitness Program (PYFP) continues more than 50 years of youth fitness testing and assessment in the United States.

Now, the leading organizations that were once working separately in this field have come together to promote the use of this voluntary program in schools nationwide.

Because of this partnership, you can rest assured the model and information provided by the program partners is based on the latest research and information available to date. By using these resources, your child's physical education teacher should be well equipped to deliver a positive and beneficial fitness education and assessment experience for all.

Home School Parents

If you are a home school parent interested in using the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, please refer to the Physical Educator Resource Guide, available on pyfp.org. The guide provides you with the information you need to make the most of the fitness education and assessment process.

By providing **FREE** tools and resources to improve fitness education, the Presidential Youth Fitness Program partners are working to raise awareness about the need for physical education and the positive impact it can have on your child's daily physical activity.

All of these things are critical to ensuring your child achieves his or her fullest potential—in school and for a lifetime. And **YOU** have the power to make a difference.



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

It's about your child's health.

Teaching your child how to be fit for life is a process. In addition to providing a variety of educational tools and activities, your child's physical education teacher may assess levels of health-related fitness. Assessment should be a positive experience. Using an assessment that focuses on health-related fitness instead of athletic performance and skill-related fitness minimizes the potential for inappropriate comparisons between children.

Fitness depends on a number of factors, some of which are out of your child's control. Therefore, it's important to remember that health and fitness goals may vary from one child to the next.

Active kids do better.

Physical activity and good nutrition make for happier, more attentive, and more productive students.

When kids are physically active

- They perform better academically.
- They have better attendance.
- They have higher self-esteem.

Studies show a significant relationship between achievement on fitness tests and improved performance on state academic assessments. Physically active students are more likely to achieve healthy levels of fitness. Physical education class plays an important role in helping your child be physically active. So, being moderately to vigorously active during the majority of physical education class time may have an impact on how your child performs in the classroom.

In addition, physical education helps:

- Create a framework of life skills that shape the whole person and encourage smart choices and a healthy lifestyle
- Expand social, cooperative, and problem-solving skills; and the ability to make self-assessments, plan fitness and activity programs, set goals, and make decisions
- Provide learning experiences that may improve alertness, academic performance, and enthusiasm for learning

All kids need quality fitness education.

We need physical educators capable of providing quality fitness education to all children.

Physical education professionals need tools and resources to reach all children and provide recognition based on sound criteria.

Only physical educators develop physical skills AND instill knowledge that will serve your child for a lifetime, regardless of profession, location, access to technology, or physical ability.

It's an important job, but one that is often overlooked and underfunded.

- Only six U.S. states require physical education in every grade K–12.
- No states follow the national recommendations for physical education time at all levels, which is 150 min/week (30 min/day) for elementary school students and 225 min/week (45 min/day) for middle and high school students.
- Physical educators report the median school budget for physical education is \$764. In a school of 500, that means that only \$1.50 annually is spent per child.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Presidential Youth Fitness Program focuses on training physical educators to make sure your child's fitness assessment is seamlessly integrated into PE class AND that it's a positive and beneficial experience. It's about more than just doing some fitness tests. Checks for knowledge and comprehension (much like those that happen in math, science, or reading) should be done along the way.

From here, working with your child's physical education teacher, you and your child can set goals to improve or maintain his or her level of physical fitness through a variety of physical activities.

Because only modest amounts of activity (60 minutes per day) are needed to obtain health benefits, children who are physically active on a regular basis should be able to achieve the Healthy Fitness Zone®.

FITNESSGRAM® Assessment

The program has adopted FITNESSGRAM® as the assessment because it:

- **Identifies your child's current level of health-related fitness by evaluating** aerobic capacity, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition (see Table 1). This information is directly related to his or her risk for developing conditions like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or type 2 diabetes. While you may think your child is too young to worry about such things now, think again. Positive habits established now will improve the chances your child will be active and healthy for years to come.
- **Is a baseline for measurement.** When children have an idea of the areas in which they're doing well as well as the areas that are in need of improvement, it's clear where they need to focus and which components of fitness, such as muscular strength and aerobic capacity, need the most attention.
- **Uses evidence-based standards** called Healthy Fitness Zones to identify your child's current level of fitness and whether it falls in the "healthy zone."

Learn More

More information on the Healthy Fitness Zone® standards can be found in the FAQ section of this guide.

Recognition

Every child deserves the opportunity to be recognized. However, it's important the recognition be meaningful and used appropriately. The Presidential Youth Fitness Program offers recognition to support the purpose of fitness assessment according to your child's age and the goal of your child's physical educator. Options include:

PYFP Fitness Club

The Presidential Youth Fitness Program Fitness Club is the recognition option for students in grades K-3. The purpose of fitness assessment at this age is to introduce students to the test items and have fun! The PYFP Fitness Club is designed to help your child's teacher create an environment that promotes just that. If your child's physical education teacher chooses to use the PYFP Fitness Club, a classroom poster may be used to help your child track his/her progress toward joining "the club" and a certificate awarded when they do. Don't worry, it may take a few years before your child can properly perform the tests, but with regular practice and physical activity, they CAN get there.



Presidential Youth Fitness Award

The Presidential Youth Fitness Award requires a student to achieve the Healthy Fitness Zone® (HFZ) on at least 5 test events, one from each of the health-related fitness components listed on Table 1.

For students participating in the Brockport assessment or a combination of Brockport and FITNESSGRAM®, the requirements are the same using the Brockport Adapted Fitness Zone and HFZ standards. See page 10 for more information on Brockport.

There is a minimal cost for recognition items, so your child’s school may or may not choose to purchase the awards for students who earn them.

Presidential Active Lifestyle Award

An alternative to the Presidential Youth Fitness Award is the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA+).

PALA+ helps develop daily physical activity and healthy eating habits. For anyone aged 6 and older, PALA+ is great for families and other groups, too. More information about PALA+ is included later in this guide.

Bottom line, your child’s physical education teacher is a great resource. If you have questions about your child’s fitness education that are not addressed in this guide, just ask!

Table 1. Components of FITNESSGRAM®

Component of Health-related Fitness	Definition	FITNESSGRAM® Assessment
Aerobic Capacity	How well your heart and lungs work together to get oxygen to working muscles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mile run • PACER • Walk Test
Muscular Strength	How much force can be exerted by a muscle or group of muscles in a single effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push-ups • Curl-ups • Trunk lift • Flexed Arm Hang • Modified Pull-up
Muscular Endurance	How long your muscles are able to continue working against a less-than-maximal resistance.	
Flexibility	The range of motion available around a particular joint.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back-Saver Sit and Reach • Shoulder Stretch
Body Composition	What part of total body weight is fat and what part is fat-free (bones and muscles).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Height and weight • Skin fold test • Bioelectric impedance analyzer



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is it necessary to assess fitness in schools?

Academic tests are administered routinely in the classroom, and assessing students' fitness levels can be just as important as testing on reading, math, science, and history. When done correctly, fitness assessments are a valuable educational tool that can help students learn how to set and reach their health-related fitness and physical activity goals. Research shows that students who are fit and regularly active perform better inside the classroom as well as outside. It's a win-win!

Why should a fitness assessment be important to my child and our family?

Whether your child dreams of becoming an astronaut or archaeologist, being healthy and fit is just as important as studying hard. In fact, being fit is essential to setting up our youngest generation for success as they progress through life. We have a responsibility to ensure that every student has the opportunity for a bright future—and that starts with good health.

How is fitness assessed?

FITNESSGRAM® is the assessment adopted by the Presidential Youth Fitness Program. It is a health-related youth fitness assessment that uses evidence-based standards to measure the level of fitness needed for good overall health.

This includes

- How well the heart and lungs pump blood and oxygen
- How strong muscles are
- How long those muscles can perform before tiring

Your child may participate in up to five separate tests in addition to having their body mass index assessed. Specific tests measure aerobic capacity, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition (see Table 1).

I remember taking a fitness test in school. Is this different?

Yes! There is a good chance that as a child you participated in either FITNESSGRAM® or the President's Challenge Physical Fitness Test (or youth fitness test). Bottom line, your child's experience through the Presidential Youth Fitness Program should look far different than your experience. Advances in research and teacher training ensure there is a purpose to asking your child to participate in the fitness assessments.



What do FITNESSGRAM® results mean?

Quite simply, FITNESSGRAM® is a measure of your child's level of health-related fitness. Children's scores either fall within the Healthy Fitness Zone® or in the Needs Improvement Zone.

A score in the Healthy Fitness Zone® represents the level of fitness needed for good overall health that is thought to provide some protection against certain diseases and chronic conditions, such as diabetes or coronary heart disease. Scores outside the Healthy Fitness Zone, particularly for the tests of aerobic capacity and body composition, suggest your child MAY be at risk for health problems if the levels do not improve. Scores outside the Healthy Fitness Zone for tests of muscular strength, endurance and flexibility suggest activities to improve those fitness components may help your child's overall physical well-being and his or her ability to be fit and active for life.

I'm not sure I'm comfortable with my child's body composition being tested. Why is testing BMI an important component and how is it calculated?

A body composition measurement can be used to identify risk for future health problems due to excess body weight. An unhealthy body composition significantly increases risk for developing cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and more. The percentage of children and teens with an unhealthy body composition has increased significantly over the past 40 years.

Most likely, your child's body composition will be assessed through a measure called body mass index (BMI), which is non-invasive and usually determined by measuring your child's height and weight. There are other methods of determining body composition that your child's teacher or school may choose to use, including body fat assessment by a bioelectrical impedance analyzer or skinfold measurement.

Who sees my child's scores?

Your child's scores are recorded and should be available only to the teacher, your child, and you. In no way should your child's score be posted publicly for other students to view or for anyone to make judgment on your child.

How is the information from the FITNESSGRAM® assessment used?

A fitness assessment is a valuable educational tool that can help students learn how to set and reach their health-related fitness and physical activity goals.

The assessment helps identify your child's current level of fitness and should be included with information on how to help your child improve or maintain his or her fitness. In some cases, your child's scores may be lumped together with the scores of all the other children in the school who participated in the assessment.

This data, when aggregated in this manner, cannot personally identify your child or his or her scores. It can be very useful to a teacher, the school, school district, or even state-level agencies by helping teachers and others plan lessons and/or track progress based on the information revealed by the compiled data.



My child has special needs. Are any changes necessary to accommodate him or her?

Children of all abilities benefit from regular physical activity and being physically fit.

The Presidential Youth Fitness Program encourages physical educators to use the Brockport Physical Fitness Test when a student is not able to complete one or more FITNESSGRAM® test items. The Brockport Physical Fitness Test is a health-related, criterion-referenced test of fitness designed primarily for use on children with disabilities.

Do all students have to be assessed?

Decisions about which grades or classes to assess, and when and how often to assess are left to state and local education agencies. Rest assured the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, which is **completely voluntary**, will provide quality resources to assist teachers in providing a beneficial experience for students and their parents.



Does my child's FITNESSGRAM® score affect his/her academic record?

No. It is not recommended that a student's score on one or more tests of the FITNESSGRAM® assessment be used to determine his or her grade. However, research does show a direct relationship between fitness levels and academic performance.



TIPS TO HELP YOUR FAMILY BE ACTIVE

Engaging in physical activity as a family can be a fun way to get everyone moving.

Studies show that kids who believe they are competent and have the skills to be physically active are more likely to be active. And those who feel supported by friends and family to become active, or are surrounded by others interested in physical activity, are more likely to participate.

Children need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity every day, but it doesn't have to occur at once. It all adds up! And remember, sleep is just as important and is an essential part of living an active, healthy life. A recent study found that with each extra hour of sleep, the risk of a child being overweight or obese dropped by nine percent.

Here are a few activities and steps that you and your family can consider to get started on a path to a healthier lifestyle:

- Encourage children to join a sports team or try a new physical activity.
- Limit TV time and keep the TV out of a child's bedroom. Avoid media use in the hour leading up to bedtime.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Walk around the block after a meal.
- When possible, have your child walk or ride her bicycle to school. Get some activity yourself by accompanying them on the journey.
- Make a new house rule: no sitting still during television commercials.
- Find time to spend together doing a fun activity: Family park day, swim day, or bike day.
- Issue a family challenge to see who can be the first to achieve a Presidential Active Lifestyle Award by committing to physical activity five days a week, for six weeks. Adults and children can both receive the award!
- Volunteer to help with afterschool physical activity programs or sports teams.
- Encourage schools to hold recess before lunch to increase physical activity before mealtime.
- Be sure that children get the sleep they need: Most children under age five need to sleep for 11 hours or more per day, children age 5-10 need 10 hours of sleep or more per day, and children over age 10 need at least 9 hours per day.



PRESIDENTIAL ACTIVE LIFESTYLE AWARD

The promotion and adoption of physical activity is at the heart of the Presidential Youth Fitness Program. The Office of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition offers the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA+) as a tool to encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyles. PALA+ is designed to motivate you and your child (aged 6 and older) to make physical activity and healthy eating part of everyday life.

Physical Activity + Nutrition = A Little Effort that Goes a Long Way

Committing to physical activity and building upon the healthy eating goals each week helps you make gradual changes that, when combined with regular physical activity, can improve your overall health and well-being.

Get Physical	Eat healthy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 60 minutes/day for kids, 30 minutes/day for adults• 5 days a week for 6 out of 8 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• add a weekly healthy eating goal• build upon those goals throughout the same six-week period

Healthy eating goals in PALA+ include:

- I made half my plate fruits and vegetables
- At least half of the grains that I ate were whole grains
- I chose fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk, yogurt, or cheese
- I drank water instead of sugary drinks
- I chose lean sources of protein
- I compared sodium (salt) in foods like soup and frozen meals and chose foods with less sodium
- I ate seafood this week
- I ate smaller portions

Earn Your PALA+

Once you achieve your physical activity and healthy eating goals you can download a free certificate.

Participation in PALA+ is one way to meet the recommendations of the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. The healthy eating goals are based on the consumer messages from the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Sign Up

Families can sign up online at supertracker.usda.gov/PALAPlus or use a paper log form (included at the end of this guide).



PALA+
activity+nutrition



SUPERTRACKER

Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA+)

PALA+ is a program of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition that promotes physical activity and good nutrition because it takes both to lead a healthy lifestyle. Anyone age 6 and older who completes PALA+ can earn a free award in recognition of establishing healthy habits. Start a PALA+ program by using this log or online with U.S. Department of Agriculture's SuperTracker.

PALA+ is an 8-week program but can be completed in as few as 6 weeks.

- **Weeks 1-5:** In the first 5 weeks, log your food and physical activity to begin a routine and reach as many goals as you can.
- **Weeks 6-8:** Beginning in week 6, you must reach your weekly physical activity goal and at least 6 of the 9 weekly healthy eating goals, including at least 1 of the dietary limit goals, to complete the program. If you need more time to reach your goals, you can try again in weeks 7 or 8.

Physical Activity Goal

Achieve the PALA+ physical activity goal by reaching the weekly minute goal. **Youth ages 6-17** need to be active for at least 300 minutes (5 hours) per week. **Adults 18 and older** need to be active for at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) per week.

Healthy Eating Goals

With PALA+ you have the freedom to choose what healthy eating goals you want to work on, which allows you to tailor the program to meet your specific needs. See below for tips on how to achieve the PALA+ healthy eating goals.

Tips for the PALA+ Healthy Eating Goals



Focus on Whole Fruit: Aim to choose whole fruits over fruit juice for extra fiber. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried and may be whole, cut-up, or pureed.



Make More of Your Grains Whole: Read the ingredients list and choose products that list a whole-grain ingredient first, such as "whole wheat," "brown rice," or "oatmeal."



Vary Your Veggies: Select a variety of colorful vegetables to get the vitamins, minerals, and fiber your body needs to be healthy. This includes fresh, frozen, or canned varieties.



Move to Fat-Free or Low-Fat Dairy: Dairy products, as well as soy milks, offer calcium, vitamin D, and many other nutrients your body needs.



Vary Your Protein Routine: Meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds are considered part of the Protein Foods Group. Select leaner cuts of beef and pork and eat turkey and chicken without skin.



Drink Water Instead of Sugary Drinks: Regular soda and other drinks such as fruit drinks and energy drinks can have added sugars. Instead, reach for a tall glass of water.

Dietary Limit Goals



Select Food With Less Sodium: Read the Nutrition Facts label to compare sodium in packaged foods like soup, canned vegetables, and frozen meals; choose the foods with lower amounts.



Limit Added Sugars: Added sugars increase calories without contributing essential nutrients and include syrups and other caloric sweeteners.



Replace Saturated Fats With Unsaturated Fats: Most saturated fats come from animal products. Choose lower fat dairy and lean options for meat and poultry—like lean beef and grilled chicken breast without the skin.

For more information on how physical activity can help promote health and reduce the risk of chronic disease, and on healthy eating patterns and how to ensure your diet is meeting your nutritional needs, please consult the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans and Dietary Guidelines for Americans available at health.gov.



Participant Name _____ Age _____

Date Started _____ Date Completed _____

Paper Log Instructions:

Circle each healthy eating goal you achieve. Enter your daily physical activity in minutes and add up the total at the end of the week. Circle the total if your goal is met. Once you achieve your goals in week 6, 7, or 8, you're eligible to receive the PALA+ award certificate at www.fitness.gov!

Healthy Eating Goals (key)

- Focus on Whole Fruits
- Make More of Your Grains Whole
- Select Foods with Less Sodium
- Drink Water Instead of Sugary Drinks
- Move to Fat-Free or Low-Fat Dairy
- Vary Your Veggies
- Vary Your Protein Routine
- Limit Added Sugars
- Replace Saturated Fats with Unsaturated Fats

PARTICIPATION LOG									
WEEK	HEALTHY EATING GOALS	PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GOAL							
		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Total
1		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Total
2		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Total
3		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Total
4		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Total
5		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Total
6		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Total
7		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Total
8		Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Total

Online Instructions:

The PALA+ program can also be completed online using USDA's SuperTracker! Create an account at www.supertracker.usda.gov. You can earn your PALA+ award by logging your food and physical activity to reach your goals.

