



## The Presidential Youth Fitness Program as an Evaluation Tool

The purpose of the Presidential Youth Fitness Program (PYFP) is to provide a voluntary program that includes a health-related assessment, as well as educational and motivational tools, to support educators and empower students to adopt an active lifestyle. The following are a few key points to remember when thinking about using the program as an evaluation tool:

- PYFP is more than an assessment. Key to the program's success is providing physical educators with the resources needed to provide students with a high quality fitness education experience, which includes the appropriate use of recognition and awards.
- While, in some cases, a fitness test or assessment may be an appropriate tool to evaluate a program, it is important to keep in mind the purpose of FITNESSGRAM® is to provide students, teachers, and parents with information on a student's current level of fitness. That information can be used by student and teacher to develop an individualized program for improving specific areas of fitness.
- In the context of school-based implementation, fitness assessment is just ONE component of a quality physical education curriculum. Therefore, it should not be used to evaluate the performance of a physical education program, including teacher effectiveness. Ernst et al. illustrate this point through the following statement, "There is great potential for diverting already limited time to 'training for physical fitness' at the expense of other important physical education objectives."<sup>1</sup> More information on the [Appropriate Uses of Fitness Measurement](#) is available from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education.
- While PYFP strives, ultimately, to increase levels of physical activity, it is not designed to assess increases in physical activity levels. Programs seeking to increase physical activity should utilize tools that can measure changes in a child's level of physical activity. (There are a number of tools available to track physical activity including ACTIVITYGRAM® and the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award, PALA+).

### The Bottom Line

An evaluation tool should align with a program's purpose. A program could be doing extraordinarily well at improving physical activity levels of youth and engaging them in activities they will continue throughout their lifetime. This positive outcome of increased physical activity may not be accurately reflected if evaluation of the program is based solely on fitness assessment scores. A fitness assessment does not measure physical activity or other health behaviors programs may be addressing, such as nutrition, positive social skills including teamwork, or the development of motor skills. In addition, changes in youth fitness levels over the program period may be influenced by a variety of factors beyond the program's control, such as the home environment and stage of puberty.

<sup>1</sup> Ernst M, Corbin C, Beigle A, Pangrazi R. Appropriate and inappropriate uses of FITNESSGRAM®: A commentary. *Journal Physical Activity & Health* 2006; 3(S2):S90-S100.

### Founding Partners

