

FITNESSGRAM AND YOUR CHILD

The Hamilton Southeastern School District is taking a progressive stance in educating and training our student population in the areas of health and fitness by implementing the FITNESSGRAM program. The FITNESSGRAM advantage is the use of criterion-referenced standards. This acknowledges that the amount of fitness required for health differs between genders and varies across ages.

FITNESSGRAM is based on the philosophy that:

- Health comes from regular physical activity and the development of health-related fitness.
- Regular physical activity and physical fitness are for everyone, regardless of age, gender, or ability.
- Physical activity and physical fitness are for the lifetime.
- Physical activity programs should be designed to meet personal needs and interests .

Hamilton Southeastern Schools Foundation is excited about the program because we believe:

- Physical Fitness is critical to your health physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and ***academically***.
- Physical Fitness stimulates the brain's memory and problem solving capacity.
- Weight is a number on a scale that alone does not indicate any level of fitness.
- All fitness plans need to include a balanced diet.

What is "FITNESSGRAM?"

FITNESSGRAM is a physical fitness/body composition testing program that reports individual fitness levels. It is not based on athleticism, but on "good health".

FITNESSGRAM was designed by the Cooper Institute to help physical educators report fitness levels specifically to parents. FITNESSGRAM uses health-related

criteria called Healthy Fitness Zones (HFZ) to determine students' overall physical fitness levels and suggests areas for improvement when appropriate. Healthy Fitness Zones are not based on class averages; they are "criterion-referenced" standards that are based on how much fitness is needed for good health. Healthy Fitness Zones were established by the FITNESSGRAM Advisory Board which includes some of the foremost scientists and practitioners in fitness and physical activity. Students are tested in the areas of cardio-vascular fitness, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition (BMI and % body fat scores). Students are not graded by their fitness scores. Scores will place them either in the HFZ or Needs Improvement category.

Who uses FITNESSGRAM?

Tens of thousands of schools nationwide already use the FITNESSGRAM assessment. These include individual school settings as well as large district implementations in cities like New York City, Baltimore County (MD) Public School District, and Miami-Dade County (FL) Public Schools – and even statewide implementation, as in Delaware, Texas, and California.

Why are physical activity and fitness tests important?

Physical activity and Physical fitness is not the same thing. Participation in regular physical activity leads to improvements in physical fitness and provides many important health benefits. "Physical activity reduces the risk of premature mortality in general, and of coronary artery disease, hypertension, colon cancer, and Type II diabetes mellitus. Physical activity also improves mental health (student academic success), emotional health (stress reduction and self confidence) and is important for the health of muscles, bones, and joints" – The Surgeon General's Report. **Physical fitness** (an outcome associated with physical activity) also has been shown to be important for health and quality of life. Assessments of physical fitness provide an effective way to evaluate the overall physical condition and potential risk of negative health outcomes.

How will Fitnessgram scores be used and viewed?

FITNESSGRAM testing will take place a minimum of twice a school year and a maximum of four times a school year. Fitness testing will start in 4th grade and continue through the 8th grade. Test scores are confidential between student, teacher and parent unless the student or parent chooses to share results. A personal report will be sent home at the end of a testing period. Suggestions are given for any areas that are outside the Healthy Fitness Zone (HFZ). Body composition testing will take place in intermediate and junior high levels. Student height and weight are used to determine BMI and % Body Fat scores (bioelectrical impedance device). Sensitivity is given to weight scores and continual emphasis is placed on the fact that weight is just a number and alone is not indicative of positive or negative levels of fitness. Students are not at any time graded on FITNESSGRAM test scores. Test scores along with Health/Physical Education curriculum will be used to set goals and work toward changing behaviors that will lead to Healthy Fitness Zones.

Why is body composition testing important for students during the growing years?

Long term studies show a relationship between adult obesity and childhood obesity especially as children become adolescents. Together these studies indicate that excessive fat tissue in children and youth increase the likelihood of obesity-related adult diseases including coronary heart disease, hypertension, high cholesterol and type II diabetes. In general, children who score in the Needs Improvement range (taking into consideration % muscle weight vs. % fat weight) will be encouraged to work toward the HFZ by increasing activity levels and changing dietary habits. Special attention is also given to students that score in the Very Lean range.

Information provided here adapted in part from the FITNESSGRAM website. For additional information, visit www.fitnessgram.net (Can we add that as a link)