

Spring 2014

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Senate Bill 530 during the 2007 Legislative Session mandated that school districts annually assess the physical fitness of students enrolled in grades 3 through 12 beginning with the 2007-2008 school year. Starting with the 2011-2012 school year, the students "required" to be tested with FITNESSGRAM annually include those in grades 3-12 who participated in any of the following classes or activities during school year: physical education, athletics, off-campus physical education, JROTC, cheerleading, drill team, marching band and dance (when used to meet the physical activity requirement). Each district across the state of Texas will use the FITNESSGRAM physical fitness test instrument to assess each student's health-related fitness each school year.

FITNESSGRAM was developed by The Cooper Institute and is the only assessment to use research based criterion-referenced standards. These standards called Healthy Fitness Zones, determine students fitness levels based on what is optimal for good health. The assessment measures three components of health-related physical fitness that have been identified as important to overall health and function:

- aerobic capacity;
- body composition; and
- muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility

FITNESSGRAM is a quality assessment for three reasons:

1. FITNESSGRAM establishes a baseline of a healthy fitness zone from which students can set goals and check their progress (non-competitive) to plan for lifelong physical activity and to maintain and improve their fitness level.
2. FITNESSGRAM provides recommended activity program options that will help students reach healthy fitness zones in those areas where they need to improve.
3. FITNESSGRAM does not place an emphasis on skill or sports-related fitness such as speed measured by an individual's 40 yard dash time. It does not compare students to other students.

FITNESSGRAM tests all students regardless of age, gender, or ability\*. Students are encouraged to be self-aware of health-related fitness and take responsibility by setting personal fitness goals. When students focus on the process of doing their personal best, a more positive lifelong impact is achieved.

On your child's test day, he/she should wear athletic shorts, a t-shirt, socks and tennis shoes. Clothing can be worn underneath an appropriate warm-up suit (jacket and pants) or underneath standardized dress. Testing in warm-ups is permitted and your child may wear the warm-up suit the entire day. If your child forgets proper testing attire, he/she will proceed with the fitness test in standardized dress.

**You may request a copy of your child's physical fitness assessment by submitting a written request to your principal by the end of the school year.** By providing you and your child with this health-related fitness information, you can lead your child toward a healthy lifestyle. A healthy student is better prepared to learn and perform in all aspects of life.

Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year there were new FITNESSGRAM Healthy Fitness Zone Standards. To view these changes please visit the FITNESSGRAM website at <http://www.fitnessgram.net/program-overview>.

If you have any questions about the FITNESSGRAM Assessment, please contact your child's principal or refer to <http://www.fitnessgram.net/state-information>.

*\*A school district is not required to assess a student for whom, as a result of disability or other condition identified by the TEA Commissioner's rule.*

# Frequently Asked Questions about Fitnessgram

## 1. Why is fitness testing important to me?

The FITNESSGRAM physical fitness assessment is based not on athletic ability, but on good health. No matter what your career path, you will live a happier, more productive life if you are healthy--and physical fitness is vital to overall health. FITNESSGRAM provides accurate and reliable information about your physical condition and how it can be improved.

## 2. Can I “fail” the Fitnessgram test?

No. FITNESSGRAM is a tool to help you determine your fitness needs and guides you in planning a personalized physical activity program. The test will not affect your grades in any way.

## 3. Will my scores be posted or be made public?

No.

## 4. Will my results be compared to other students?

No. FITNESSGRAM uses Healthy Fitness Zones (HFZ) to determine your overall physical fitness. HFZs are not based on class averages or any other peer comparisons. The standards are set specifically for boys and girls of different ages using the best available research. If your score falls within the HFZ, it means you have achieved the recommended level of fitness for your age. If your score falls below the HFZ, you should engage in activities that will help you improve.

## 5. What are the Fitnessgram Test items?

There are six test items:

- Either the Mile Run, PACER (20 meter shuttle runs) or the Walk Test (measures aerobic capacity)
- Push-ups (measures upper body muscular strength/endurance)
- Curl-ups (measures abdominal muscular strength/endurance)
- Back Saver Sit and Reach and the Shoulder Stretch (measures flexibility)
- Trunk Lift (measures trunk extensor strength and flexibility)
- Body Mass Index (measures body composition: appropriateness of weight relative to height)

## 6. What can I do to prepare for the fitness test?

- Actively play or move at least **60** minutes at least **five** days during the week. Walk, jog, play tennis, play racquetball or participate in any activity you enjoy.
- Do strength training activities such as sit-ups, push-ups, modified push-ups or climbing activities **2-3** days each week. Begin doing as many repetitions as possible and try to increase repetitions gradually.
- Eat a healthy diet by including more fruits and vegetables and reducing fats and sugars.
- Ask a physical education teacher or coach on your campus for specific tips on ways you can prepare not only for the FITNESSGRAM test, but for a lifetime of good overall health.