

# The Importance of Fitness Assessments

## IMPORTANCE OF FITNESS ASSESSMENT, PHILOSOPHY BEHIND FITNESSGRAM, AND BENEFITS OF USING FITNESSGRAM

FITNESSGRAM is based on the philosophy represented by the acronym HELP, meaning **H**ealth is available to **E**veryone for a **L**ifetime, and it is **P**ersonal:

- **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

(Note: The HELP acronym was developed by Dr. Charles Corbin, a leading researcher in youth fitness and an original member of the FITNESSGRAM Scientific Advisory Board.)

### HEALTH- VS. SKILL-RELATED FITNESS

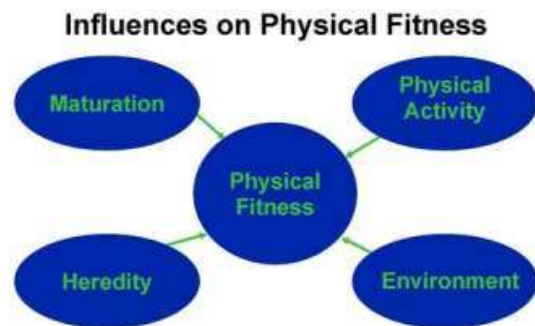
*Health-related fitness* includes aerobic capacity, body composition, muscular strength, muscular endurance and flexibility. Each of these dimensions is related to overall health in children and adults. For example, aerobic capacity is essential for decreasing risks of heart disease, diabetes, and strokes. Strength and flexibility are important in reducing risks of osteoporosis and improving functional capacity.

*Skill-related fitness* includes agility, speed, coordination, balance, power, and reaction time. These dimensions are important for performance in certain sports, but they do not influence a person's health status directly. It's still important for children to develop physical skills in order to perform physical activity as adults, but health-related fitness is a more important objective and is necessary for all people.

- Not all children can become elite athletes, but
- all children can enjoy the benefits of a physically active lifestyle.



### Influences on physical fitness



Heredity, environment, maturation, and physical activity all have an impact on physical fitness. It's true that the greatest single factor is genetics—some children will tend to have a lower fitness level due to hereditary factors—however, all children can significantly improve their

fitness and health through regular physical activity.

### **Everyone can succeed—process and product**

A central tenet of the FITNESSGRAM philosophy is that if you do the process (physical activity), the *product* (health-related fitness) will follow. A key goal, then, is to encourage all children to participate in regular physical activity. By focusing on physical activity rather than fitness or performance, all children can be successful.

FITNESSGRAM uses the Healthy Fitness Zone® standards. Unlike norm-based standards, which compare students' scores against one another, the Healthy Fitness Zones are criterion-referenced standards based on extensive research to determine the level of fitness needed for good health. Using these standards helps to minimize comparisons between children and emphasizes setting goals to improve overall health rather than goals based solely on performance.

### **Lifetime physical activity, fitness, and health**

Ultimately, the goal of FITNESSGRAM is not only to encourage children to be more physically active, but to encourage them to value physical activity. Quality physical education programs incorporate physical activities that encourage health-related fitness and allow every student an equal opportunity to participate and succeed. Experiencing success in physical activity, and learning how it feels to be more physically fit, fosters positive attitudes about physical activity that children will carry into adulthood, increasing the likelihood that they'll remain physically active as adults.

### **Personalized physical activity plans**

The FITNESSGRAM program includes reports that provide individualized feedback on each child's personal level of health-related fitness as compared to the Healthy Fitness Zone standards. A [PDF of sample reports](#) is available.

The FITNESSGRAM report indicates areas where a child might need to improve in order to meet the Healthy Fitness Zone standards for one or more test components. These reports can serve as the basis for an individualized physical activity plan. And since only modest amounts of exercise are needed for obtaining health benefits, most students who participate in physical activity almost every day will be able to achieve FITNESSGRAM assessment results that will place them in the Healthy Fitness Zone standards.

### **FITNESSGRAM as part of the bigger picture**

The essential goals of youth fitness and activity promotion are to increase the probability that youth will adopt regular physical activity habits and maintain adequate levels of physical fitness to contribute to optimal health and function throughout life. By applying the HELP philosophy throughout physical education programs, we believe there is a greater chance that children will grow up to become active and healthy adults.

**Comment [DH1]:** Link to <http://www.FITNESSGRAM.net/AcuCustom/SiteName/DAM/100/fgsamplereports.pdf>