

GETTING STUDENTS FIT

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Winter is almost over and Spring is fast approaching. It's a time for sunshine, flowers, and fitness testing! Yes, springtime is when State-mandated fitness testing for grades 5, 7, and 9 are supposed to be done. Testing should measure what people learn and retain. Which means fitness training should be an ongoing part of our students' educational program. The primary goal of the "*Fitnessgram* program is to assist students in establishing physical activity as part of their daily lives." According to the California State Department of Education, this includes students with special needs. That is why options are provided and modifications of testing procedures are allowed.

Physical fitness consists of three components: 1) aerobic capacity, 2) body composition, and 3) muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility. The State requires 6 tests:

- ✍ one of the options from aerobic capacity [endurance for the heart and lungs]
- ✍ one of the options from body composition [amount of body fat]
- ✍ the curl-up test [abdominal muscle strength]
- ✍ the trunk lift test [strength and flexibility of the back]
- ✍ one of the options from upper body strength [strength of the arm muscles]
- ✍ one of the options from flexibility [stretching muscles of the shoulders or lower back]

Parents can help at home to get their children more physically fit. Encourage your child to do fitness activities at least 3 times per week. Here are some ideas you might want to try:

- ✍ Jog to the corner and back (supervised for safety), around the backyard, or some other safe location, 5-10 times. Keep a chart of how many times and how fast they finish. Give a reward for participation each week and a special reward for improvement. Work toward 10-12 minutes of continuous jogging/walking.
- ✍ Go for long bike rides (at least 10 minutes of hand or foot pedaling). Make the ride special by looking for things around the neighborhood, such as yellow flowers, a green house, or a red car.
- ✍ For students using a wheelchair, wheel around the house on a treasure hunt to find, as quickly as possible, objects placed in different locations.
- ✍ On trash day, have your child help push the trash can from your home to the street.
- ✍ Do slow stretches of arm and leg muscles while watching TV.
- ✍ Play "tug-of-war" games to help improve arm muscle strength for pull-ups.
- ✍ Do indoor chair exercises, such as lifting up both knees 10 times while sitting up and holding the chair seat without leaning against the back of the chair. This helps strengthen the abdominal muscles.

BE CREATIVE! Come up with your own ideas. Ask your child to create activities. Ask them to show you ones they do in school that help strengthen or stretch their arm or leg muscles or help improve their endurance. Make sure the activities are not too difficult or too easy. Encourage success and enjoyment in physical activity!