



Appropriate & Inappropriate Use of Fitness Testing Data Position Statement from the FitnessGram[®] Scientific Advisory Board

The principal mission of the FitnessGram program is to promote lifelong physical activity and attainment of health related physical fitness. FitnessGram is based on the 'HELP Philosophy' ("Health is for Everyone for a Lifetime and it's Personal"). This position statement describes uses of the FitnessGram assessment that are consistent with the HELP philosophy.

Program Goals and Guiding Principles

The primary goal of FitnessGram is to build cognitive and behavioral skills that will facilitate learning about physical activity and physical fitness concepts and increase the likelihood that students will adopt lifetime patterns of physical activity. To that end, the FitnessGram assessments (and reports) are designed to provide teachers, children, and parents with information about physical fitness relative to established health-related standards. Emphasis in instruction should be placed on helping students learn how to complete assessments, interpret results, and plan physical activity programs to maintain or improve their fitness. Aggregate results can also have value for school and district level tracking and evaluation if used appropriately. The following recommendations summarize appropriate and inappropriate uses of the FitnessGram assessment for school applications.

Appropriate Uses for FitnessGram:

- Teaching students about different types and intensities of physical activity
- Teaching students about criterion referenced health standards and health-related fitness
- Personal testing to evaluate physical activity and/or health-related fitness
- Helping students to self-monitor physical activity and track fitness results over time
- Sharing results with parents to promote family involvement and engagement
- Institutional testing to allow teachers to view group data (for curriculum development)
- Annual institutional evaluation of the fitness levels of the student population

Inappropriate Uses for FitnessGram

- Evaluating individual students in physical education (e.g. grading or state standards testing)
- Using as a sole criterion to justify students who can "test out" of physical education
- Evaluating teacher effectiveness (e.g. teacher evaluations)

Individual FitnessGram reports are designed to be shared with children and parents since they provide a means to promote education and behavior change. However, consistent with the HELP philosophy, reports should be distributed (and discussed) with care to ensure that information is provided in a personal and confidential manner. Individual scores and computer files should be protected as confidential information consistent with district and state guidelines.

Assessments of physical activity and physical fitness provide schools, teachers, students and their parents with valuable programmatic information. While there are many possible uses, emphasis should be on student education, skill building, and motivation to instill lifelong interest in physical activity. A major determinant of lifetime physical activity is confidence in skills and behaviors associated with physical activity (i.e. self-efficacy). Therefore, uses of FitnessGram that enhance self-efficacy are encouraged and those that undermine self-efficacy are discouraged. Ways to increase students' self-efficacy include providing practice with the test prior to evaluation, providing verbal encouragement during the test, and emphasizing progress and improvement over time. Following these FitnessGram guidelines will help ensure that school-based assessments and programming are consistent with the HELP philosophy.