



Making the case for individualized health-related fitness education

by Scott Wikgren

“In light of the epidemics of obesity and diabetes and other chronic diseases among children,” NASPE executive director Charlene Burgeson said when announcing the National Standards for Physical Education in 2004, “there is an even stronger emphasis on physical education’s contribution to good health. Physical education in all K-12 schools provides the foundation for healthy, active lifestyles that support learning and ensure future success.”

To meet the mandate of high-quality physical education, physical educators need to individualize health-related fitness education to meet the needs of the learners. This can be extremely challenging, but with creative tools like Physical Best, Fitness for Life, and Fitnessgram®, physical educators are becoming more like personal trainers than coaches—that is, they focus on activity and nutrition, which lead to good health and wellness. And in our society of sedentary spectators, physical educators need to emphasize actual *participation* in physical activity

along with the principles of fitness, health, and wellness—all in an environment of shrinking school budgets and reduced time for physical education.

Playing games has always been a staple of physical education. However, most experts now agree that while playing age-appropriate games is important, the emphasis needs to be on building lifelong skills and attitudes.

High-quality fitness education blends the teaching of fitness concepts with appropriate activity so that students become informed consumers of information on physical activity, nutrition, and wellness and are ready to assume responsibility for their own health. A major tenet of high-quality physical education is that all students should be given the opportunity to participate in healthful activity and encouraged to make good health and physical activity lifelong habits.

Obviously, it’s time for a creative solution—a solution that does not add any more strain to teachers’ busy schedules

but provides students with the content knowledge they need, opportunity for physical activity, and valid assessment to demonstrate to school administrators and the public that the program is effective at making children healthier. Fitness for Life, Physical Best, and Fitnessgram are resources that work together to do just that.

Fitness for Life provides a well-researched and articulated K-12 health-related fitness curriculum with award-winning student textbooks. Physical Best provides a sound pedagogical basis for teaching health-related fitness as well as activities that teach health-related fitness concepts through movement. Fitnessgram is a criterion-referenced health-related fitness assessment that provides individualized reports for students and parents as well reports for teachers, administrators, and researchers that help them analyze data schoolwide, districtwide, or statewide.

The following three pages examine these program resources in greater depth.

Education has become a data-driven environment; for the most part, this is a positive thing. The collection and analysis of data provide educators a wealth of information for making sound curricular and pedagogical decisions. Fitnessgram®, long considered the gold standard of physical fitness assessment, has just been released in a Web-based format that will greatly enhance its utility as a data collection and analysis tool.

Administrators can compare Fitnessgram data to other factors, including academic achievement and socioeconomic data, in order to make wide-reaching decisions. California, Texas, and New York City are just three examples of large research studies that looked at these factors using data from Fitnessgram.

One outcome of these and other studies has been to capture the attention of administrators who previously had not valued the importance of a high-quality physical education program. Although causation studies have not yet been done, the data have clearly shown a positive association between students in the Healthy Fitness Zone® of Fitnessgram and academic achievement. There also seems to be a positive association with other issues, such as improved attendance and fewer suspensions and incidents of negative behavior. Certainly having data from a valid and reliable assessment that uses scientifically generated criteria helps physical educators make the case for the value of their programs, which cannot be



Data-driven educational tool with a personal touch

underestimated in a tight economy and a high-stakes testing environment.

Not only does Fitnessgram offer a big-picture look at assessment data, but teachers can also quickly generate individualized reports for students and parents. This ensures clear communication among all stakeholders in helping students improve their health-related fitness. With the use of Fitnessgram, students receive a

consistent message from all involved, and physical educators earn support for the work that they do.

High-quality physical educators prepare students to take responsibility for their own fitness as adults. No longer is it acceptable to assess students only on their knowledge of the height of a volleyball net or the width of a football field. Instead, teachers will review Fitnessgram reports with their students and help them understand how to apply skills such as goal setting and program planning as well as principles of overload, progression, and frequency, intensity, type, and time (FITT) to their specific needs. The skills and knowledge in applying these principles will serve students well their entire lives, no matter what physical activities they choose to participate in. These concepts are best taught with a physical education curriculum like Fitness for Life, while programs like Physical Best provide the day-to-day physical activities and the teacher training to implement the whole program.

While Fitnessgram 9 greatly enhances the value of the program as a data collection and analysis tool, it also improves on its original mission of promoting lifelong physical fitness, physical activity, and other health-related behaviors on an individualized basis.



Find out more: Fitnessgram

HEALTH-RELATED FITNESS ASSESSMENT AND SOFTWARE

Fitnessgram was developed by The Cooper Institute and is published by Human Kinetics, which is the sole source vendor.



Through a grant to The Cooper Institute, NFL PLAY 60 will provide Fitnessgram software and test kits to 1,120 schools throughout each of the NFL's team markets. Data will be collected over the course of three years to form a longitudinal study tracking health-related youth fitness results.

Web site:
Fitnessgram.net

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800-747-4457

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K12sales@hkusa.com

Provide a well-rounded curriculum for teaching fitness education in grades K–12

Research has shown that personal fitness classes that teach self-management skills are effective at promoting lifetime activity.¹ It's clear that this is the approach a good fitness education class needs to take to reach that goal of helping kids become healthy and active adults.

One prominent example of this kind of curriculum is the Fitness for Life program, developed by Chuck Corbin, who pioneered the conceptual approach to physical education more than 30 years ago. Today, Dr. Corbin and coauthors have expanded Fitness for Life to a comprehensive K-12 program. This standards-based program has been carefully articulated, following a pedagogically sound scope and sequence to enhance student learning and progress.

The latest addition to the series, *Fitness for Life: Elementary School*, debuted at the 2010 AAHPERD National Convention. *Fitness for Life: Elementary School* provides the impetus for physical educators or others in the school to facilitate total-school involvement with the innovative

multimedia program. It can be bought as a package and implemented schoolwide, or schools can choose the books they need. The series provides a wealth of material in the form of lessons, DVDs, and audio CDs that include classroom activities and discussions, recess, before- and afterschool activities, and PE lesson plans to deliver appropriate physical activity and teach health-related fitness concepts at the elementary level.

The middle school and high school programs are based on a student textbook model, and these award-winning texts are supported by a wealth of ancillary materials to make teaching the course efficient. *Fitness for Life: Middle School* exposes students to a variety of physical activities while teaching the benefits of healthy, active lifestyles. It also introduces key fitness and movement concepts, self-assessments, and teaches skills that build self-esteem and personal and social responsibility.

Finally, *Fitness for Life, Updated Fifth Edition* (the original high school text) sets



students on the path to lifelong fitness and health by teaching self-management and program planning skills. Through a combination of classroom and physical activity lessons, students learn more in-depth fitness and wellness concepts, perform self-assessments, gain self-responsibility, and develop individualized lifetime physical activity and wellness plans.

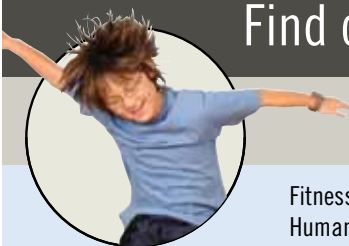
All three program levels include the Fitnessgram test components as part of the educational process.

Fitness for Life has been successful at all levels because it is effective at delivering physical education curriculum content that is essential to students' long-term health and wellness through physical activities. This is proven not only by evidence-based research but also by testimonials from leading physical educators across the country who speak to the success they've had with Fitness for Life.²

¹ Dale, D.L., & Corbin, C.B. (2000). Physical activity participation of high school graduates following exposure to conceptual or traditional physical education. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 71, (1)61-68.

² Fitness for Life. (2010). Video Testimonials. www.FitnessforLife.org/testimonials

Find out more: Fitness for Life



HEALTH-RELATED FITNESS EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAM

Fitness for Life, created by Chuck Corbin and published by Human Kinetics, is available at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels.



Web site:
FitnessforLife.org



Phone:
800-747-4457



E-mail:
K12sales@hkusa.com

Though the mandate to emphasize health-related fitness education and lifetime physical activities is clear, physical educators still face challenges in implementing new programs. That's why the Physical Best program, developed by NASPE, was created. Physical Best combines developmentally appropriate, standards-based fitness education resources with expert professional development to provide physical educators the tools they need to greatly enhance their physical education programs.

Physical Best training provides certification and in-service workshops carried out by a network of professionals throughout the United States. Full-day and half-day programs are available that teach the history and philosophy of health-related fitness education and assessment. These programs also cover the Fitnessgram® test protocols and Fitnessgram software.

Physical Best also offers two workshops that focus on Fitnessgram. The Introduction to Physical Best and Fitnessgram workshop provides an overview of program principles and walks teachers through the activities and assignments. Assessment with Fitnessgram provides hands-on training on Fitnessgram software and assessment protocols and also touches on Activitygram, one of the additional software modules that's bundled with Fitnessgram.

Full- and half-day workshops called Implementing a Fitness for Life course, cover the principles of a Fitness for Life

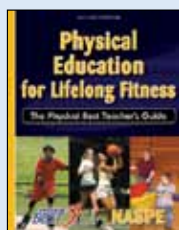


course as well as implementation and course scheduling options.

Anytime you implement a new program, providing a group training opportunity is a great way to ensure everyone's on board with the program. Physical Best is a great

program for getting staff to understand the implementation of Fitnessgram or Fitness for Life. Even more important, getting everyone on the same page philosophically can set the stage for a good outcome.

Find out more: Physical Best training and resources



Physical Education for Lifelong Fitness: The Physical Best Teacher's Guide, Second Edition, covers all the bases that teachers need for implementing a health-related physical education curriculum that promotes lifelong fitness. Teachers will benefit from experienced educators' wisdom about real-world physical education and will learn how to

- set realistic but challenging goals for their programs and students,
- revitalize their curriculum with cutting-edge information, and
- plan their curriculum to meet national and state health-related fitness standards.



The *Physical Best Activity Guides*—available for the elementary school and middle and high school levels—help teachers

- implement ready-to-use activities based on the latest national guidelines from NASPE,
- provide appropriate activities for students of all abilities, and
- save time and program funds by using reproducible forms from the CD-ROM.

New editions of *Physical Education for Lifelong Fitness: The Physical Best Teacher's Guide* and the *Physical Best Activity Guides* will be available in March 2011 from Human Kinetics.



www.aahperd.org/naspe/professionaldevelopment/PhysicalBest



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