



Georgia Department of Education

The Georgia Student Health and Physical Education (SHAPE) Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Georgia SHAPE

Q: What is Georgia Shape?

The Georgia Student Health and Physical Education (SHAPE) Initiative was passed in the 2009 Georgia legislative session, and is now Official Code of Georgia 20-2-777.

Beginning in the 2011-2012 school year, the law requires each local school district to conduct an annual fitness assessment program for all students in grades 1 - 12 enrolled in Georgia public school physical education classes taught by certified physical education teachers.

Q: Why should physical education testing be required in schools?

Standardized testing is a useful tool for all school subjects to monitor trends and changes, collect data, and improve programs, curriculum and policy. Just like academic testing, standardized testing for physical education classes provides these same benefits and opportunities for improvement.

Q. Who is the Georgia SHAPE Partnership?

The Department of Education is responsible for data collection and coordinating requirements in compliance with the law. In 2010, the Governor's Office recognized the opportunity to bring together the Georgia SHAPE Partnership, a group of government, education, healthcare and non-profit leaders to collaborate on this statewide effort. These partners support funding, training, data centralization, reward/recognition, and a sustainable plan for long-term results.

- **The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)** is responsible for compliance with the law, coordinating school activities, and collecting and reporting data. They also lead the fitness advisory committee of subject experts.
- **Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (Children's)** provides overall leadership coordinating public-private funding, overall communication strategy, and the implementation plan for both the pilot and the statewide roll-out.
- **The Georgia Governor's Office** provides for a reward and recognition program to incentivize school participation.
- **The Georgia Department of Community Health, Division of Public Health (DPH)** analyzes and links data.



Georgia Department of Education

- **Atlanta Falcons Youth Foundation (AFYF)** provides guidance for securing private investments and helps coordinate the reward and recognition program to incentivize school participation.

Q: What is the SHAPE Pilot Program?

The pilot program includes training and testing within five school systems (about 214 schools) is being conducted during the 2010 school year. The school systems who have agreed to participate in the pilot program are Gwinnett, Bibb, Hall, Lowndes, and White. Statewide implementation will be conducted during the 2011-2012 school year.

Q: What are the benefits for participating schools?

- Compliance with the law: Schools who participate will be in compliance with Georgia Code 20-2-777.
- Rewards and recognition: Incentives will be provided for schools who participate, as well as schools who improve and maintain certain fitness standards.
- Improvement and support for physical education programs: Data collected from the testing will be used to improve programs.

Q: What are the benefits for the state?

Consistent health related fitness data will be collected that will:

- Establish baseline data
- Track and monitor trends and changes over time
- Establish the possibility for future linkages to other indicators
- Enable the development of data driven strategies to combat childhood obesity.

Q. What are the benefits for parents and students?

Like academic test scores, physical education testing lets students and parents know how the student is doing through standard measures of physical fitness. Parents will receive a report detailing their child's health related fitness levels, along with recommendations for improvement. Although this is not a diagnostic tool, these results can facilitate important conversations concerning personal health related fitness improvement.

Q: What mechanism and criteria are being used for testing?

In June 2010, the Georgia Department of Education selected *FITNESSGRAM*[®], a comprehensive health-related physical fitness and activity assessment and computerized reporting system developed by The Cooper Institute.



Georgia Department of Education

2. Fitness and Wellness in Georgia

Q. Why is it important for students to be physically active?

Participation in regular physical activity leads to improvements in physical fitness and provides many important health benefits.

"Physical activity reduces the risk of premature mortality in general, and of coronary artery disease, hypertension, colon cancer, and diabetes mellitus in particular. Physical activity also improves mental health and is important for the health of muscles, bones, and joints."

Source: Surgeon General's Report called Physical Activity and Health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996).

Q. What are the benefits of being physically fit?

Physical fitness (an outcome associated with participation in physical activity) also has been shown to be important for health and quality of life. Assessments of physical fitness provide an effective way to evaluate overall physical condition and potential risk for negative health outcomes. Physical fitness is also more easily assessed than physical activity since it doesn't vary on a day-to-day basis. It is important to note that physical fitness is also influenced by factors that are out of a person's control (for example, genetics). While not everyone can be an elite athlete, most people can achieve healthy levels of fitness by performing the recommended amounts of physical activity.

Q. What does the current picture of physical activity and wellness look like for Georgia's children?

- Our state has the second highest rate of overweight and obese children in the country with nearly one in three children ages 10 to 17 considered overweight or obese.
- Only five in nine (55 percent) middle school students and four in nine (44 percent) high school students meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requirements for recommended physical activity.
- More than two in five of Georgia's middle school students (44 percent) and high school students (43 percent) watch TV for three or more hours on a school day.
- Obese children are three times more likely to be hospitalized than children who are not obese. Obesity-related healthcare costs reach an estimated \$2.1 billion a year.

Sources: Georgia Department of Community Health, Division of Public Health and *F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America 2009*, by the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



Georgia Department of Education

Q. How does a fitness report lead to better health and fitness?

The FITNESSGRAM report generated by the FG software provides information about fitness in an easy to read format. More importantly, the report provides personalized tips and suggestions that can help in planning an individualized fitness plan. An accurate assessment of physical fitness is one component of a comprehensive physical education curriculum that incorporates health-related fitness education. The report provides a way for teachers (and parents) to teach children about the importance of being active and fit throughout their life.

Q. How will data collected from fitness testing in Georgia be used to improve health and fitness?

The collection and subsequent use of the data will be used for evaluation purposes. The valuable and innovative data collected through the fitness testing process will be utilized to provide information about obesity prevalence and fitness levels among children in Georgia, identify correlates and consequences of obesity, and to develop interventions and policies that can support a healthier Georgia.

Instruction for Georgia's fitness assessment teaches that students be weighed-in backwards to avoid any emphasis on weight as a number. Even the student is not informed of their weight to eliminate being pressured by other students to share their results. Body composition is only one component of an overall assessment which focuses on health rather than numbers. The report indicates if a child is above or below the healthy fitness zone, provides recommendations, and explains the limitations of BMI.

Body composition testing offers an opportunity for teachers to deal with the cultural obsessions with thinness and body image that prevail in our society. The teacher can set a tone of acceptance for different body types and acknowledge the important genetic contribution to obesity. Using FITNESSGRAM can help young children set realistic standards for their body and avoid the overemphasis on leanness that is often displayed by our culture.