

AHA: New school fitness assessment will aid in the battle against childhood obesity

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American Heart Association CEO Nancy Brown issued the following comments on a unified fitness assessment program announced today by The President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition; the American Alliance for Health, Recreation, Physical Education and Dance; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and the Cooper Institute:

"The new school fitness program launched today by The President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition and other organizations is a positive step forward in the battle to promote children's health and improve the quality of physical education in the United States.

This assessment will be a great way to evaluate the health impact of [physical education programs](#) in schools and allow for a standardized comparison of fitness levels of children across the country. The information collected can be used to inform course curriculum development, children's physical activity programming and policy change. In addition, the data will be a key resource in developing future strategies to tackle the [childhood obesity epidemic](#), reduce children's [risk factors for heart disease](#) and promote daily physical education in schools.

A high-quality physical education program enhances the physical, mental, [social and emotional development](#) of every child, and it incorporates fitness education and assessment to help children understand, improve, and maintain their physical well-being.

Childhood obesity rates have tripled over the last few decades. Almost

20 percent of young Americans are currently considered obese and are at a greater their risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, hypertension and other life-threatening illnesses.

Research shows that healthy, more physically fit children learn more effectively, are higher academic achievers, have better attendance and are better behaved in school. The [American Heart Association](#) fully supports this effort, and we urge all states and school districts to integrate this fitness assessment into their physical education programs."

Provided by American Heart Association

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