

NASPE's Appropriate Practices for Health-Related Fitness and Fitness Testing

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To set a context for the fitness education component of a commencement level program and fitness testing, it is helpful to review what is considered appropriate professional practice. NASPE has authored publications for high school, middle school, and elementary school levels that explain appropriate and inappropriate practices on a variety of topics including health-related fitness and fitness testing. These identify key aspects of professional practice for curricula, instruction, and assessment and are presented to provide specific guidelines for instructional practices that support maximum opportunities for developmentally appropriate student achievement. Inappropriate practices identify common practices that are counterproductive or even harmful to the physical, mental, social, and emotional development of children and adolescents, and they should be avoided or changed.

Fitness Instruction

Appropriate Practice

Teachers facilitate development and maintenance of physical fitness. They provide instruction about the techniques of training for fitness, setting personal goals, adjusting programs for age change, injury, or disability. Teachers use assessments and are knowledgeable of standardized fitness testing procedure. Teachers help students interpret and utilize assessment data for achieving desired fitness levels. Teachers convey to students the fact that physical fitness is not just a high school experience but provides a lifetime of benefit that can be maintained by well-planned and well-executed physical activity participation.

Inappropriate Practice

Physical fitness activity consists of mass exercises following a designated leader or standard routine. Teacher provides no explanations of "how" or "why" for student understanding. Students do not learn how to set goals or to individualize personal fitness programs for themselves. Preparation for fitness testing is not a planned part of the curriculum. Interpretation of test results is not addressed and use of norm-referenced standards puts a focus on comparison to others rather than health-related goals and benefits. Teachers do not present information and skills that will enable students to create their own on-going fitness plans.

Warm-Up and Fitness Development

Appropriate Practice

Teachers provide warm-up activities to prepare students for the activities that will follow. Exercises and activities included in the warm-up are safe for the fitness and ability levels of students. Students learn to warm up gradually, without putting strain on joints and/or muscles. Teachers convey correct procedures for developing each component of fitness, and students know several safe exercises for each component and muscle group. Students understand the principle of overload and use it to increase levels of strength and fitness. Teachers monitor students during the exercise regime to ensure safe execution of the exercises performed. Exercises are varied and enjoyable to perform.

Inappropriate Practice

Students warm up as they wish, without guidance or instruction from the teacher. Teachers direct the same warm-up exercises every day, regardless of the upcoming activity. Time allotted for warming up is insufficient to accomplish its purpose, leaving students vulnerable to injury. All students do the same exercises regardless of their fitness levels. Teachers conduct unsafe activities (e.g., ballistic stretches, double leg lifts, deep knee bends, etc.). Student does not learn correct techniques or purposes of exercises.

Developing Health-Related Fitness

Appropriate Practice

Children participate in activities that are designed to help them understand the concepts of health-related fitness and to value the contributions they make to a healthy lifestyle. Activity-based fitness is emphasized rather than fitness through formal exercises/calisthenics. Fitness is presented as a positive experience in which students feel socially and emotionally comfortable, and able to overcome challenges on a personal level. The joy of participation in health-enhancing activity leading to lifetime fitness is the goal of fitness development in elementary school physical education.

Inappropriate Practice

Teacher requires participation in group fitness activities but does not help students understand the reasons for fitness development. The process of fitness development is not monitored, and guidance for setting personal goals and strategies for goal attainment are not provided. All children are required to do the same fitness activities regardless of their fitness levels. Teachers do not teach students the difference between health-related and skill-related fitness. Calisthenics/mass exercise is THE avenue for fitness development.

Use of Fitness Testing

Appropriate Practice	Inappropriate Practice
<p>Teachers encourage students to develop health-related fitness and use fitness tests as part of a fitness education program within physical education. Teachers use results from fitness testing to plan instruction. Areas of weakness are targeted and appropriate activities are planned to improve fitness in these areas. Fitness tests measure health-related fitness components, and criterion-based standards are used to set student goals. Alternative tests and standards are used to measure fitness for students with disabilities. Teachers implement strategies to help all students reach their targeted goals.</p>	<p>Teachers administer fitness tests once or twice and do not incorporate results into fitness education planning. All students perform the same fitness tests and are expected to meet the same standard without regard to appropriate modification/adjustments. Sometimes teachers use norm-referenced standards and grade students on scores.</p>

Physical Fitness Testing

Appropriate Practice	Inappropriate Practice
<p>Teachers use fitness assessment as part of the ongoing process of helping children understand, enjoy, improve, and/or maintain their physical fitness and well-being.</p> <p>Test results are shared privately with children and their parents as a tool for developing personal goals and strategies for maintaining and increasing the respective fitness parameters.</p> <p>As part of an ongoing program of physical education, children are physically prepared in each fitness component so they can safely complete the assessments. (Assessment packages, such as FITNESSGRAM, provide a scientifically based fitness assessment while educational materials such as Physical Best are essential for providing the scientific and health-related background necessary for comprehensive fitness education for effectively implementing health-related fitness education.)</p>	<p>Teachers administer physical fitness tests once or twice each year for the purpose of identifying children to receive awards or to meet a requirement of the school district or state department.</p> <p>Children complete physical fitness test batteries without understanding why they are performing the tests or the relationship to their activity level and individual goals. Results are interpreted based on comparison to norms rather than in terms of how they apply to children's future health and well-being.</p> <p>Individual scores are publicly posted, comparisons are made between student scores, and/or grades are based on fitness scores.</p> <p>Children are required to take fitness tests without adequate conditioning.</p>

See the following publications for additional information.

- Appropriate Practices for Elementary School Physical Education.* National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) 2000.
- Appropriate Practices for Middle School Physical Education.* National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) 2001.
- Appropriate Practices for High School Physical Education.* National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) 2004.