
Section 1: Introduction

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Purpose of This Resource

This teacher resource provides fitness assessment guidelines that align with the fitness management learning outcomes identified in *Kindergarten to Senior 4 Physical Education/Health Education: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes for Active Healthy Lifestyles* (Manitoba Education and Training, 2000). These guidelines focus on health-related fitness components to promote lifelong physical activity and well-being.

Time for a Change

Guidelines for Fitness Assessment in Manitoba Schools: A Resource for Physical Education/Health Education is a revised edition of the original guidelines outlined in *Manitoba Schools Fitness* (Manitoba Education and Training, 1989). The need for an updated edition was identified in *Review of the Literature on Best Practices Related to Fitness Development* (Gannon, Halas, Ng, & Chuchmach, 2002), sponsored by Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth.

The revision of these guidelines was undertaken due to the concern that current fitness assessment and teaching practices in Manitoba schools may be out of date and may no longer reflect “best practices.” For example, the past use of norm-referenced criteria to assess fitness assessment results may have promoted negative consequences with regard to lifelong fitness development and participation in physical activity. The new guidelines, therefore, discourage the use of norm-referenced evaluation. Best practices now encourage either criterion-referenced interpretation of assessment results or assessment based on change (i.e., improvement) related to personal goal setting. In support of this approach, students should be encouraged to assess themselves and understand that they are not competing against other students or for better grades. Testing methodologies have also changed and these changes are reflected in the revised guidelines.

Fundamentally, these fitness assessment guidelines also support the philosophical change in approach to fitness development, shifting emphasis from fitness score achievement to the achievement of skills that will enable students to manage their own personal fitness over a lifetime of physical activity. This shift from an outcome-oriented approach to a process-oriented approach is well supported by the literature pertaining to physical fitness development (Sallis, 1994; Weiss, 2000; Boreham & Riddoch, 2001). For example, the word “test,” which denotes an outcome, has been replaced by the word “task,” which better reflects a process.

The ultimate goal of this resource is to help teachers establish positive attitudes and lifestyle habits in their students that are conducive to “healthy, active living.” Teachers are encouraged to emphasize and teach toward long-term benefits of total fitness.

Physical Inactivity: A Growing Concern

Various changes in society have created the opportunity for children and youth to lead a more sedentary lifestyle and consume foods that are high in calories. Since the publication of the original *Manitoba Schools Fitness* guidelines (1989), the prevalence of obesity in Canadian children has doubled (Tremblay & Willms, 2000), a statistic that is supported by other developed nations (Reilly, Dorosty, & Emmett, 1999; Ogden, Flegal, Carroll, & Johnson, 2002). Over the same period of time, the amount of daily physical activity in children/youth has reached alarmingly low levels. Cycling and walking to school have become less usual behaviours and playing in the street has been curtailed by safety concerns (Boreham & Riddoch, 2001). In 2003, three out four Canadian children/youth did not meet the minimum recommended level of daily physical activity. These statistics have led to the growing concern that the current behaviour patterns of children and youth may accelerate the likelihood of developing lifestyle-related diseases in adulthood (e.g., cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, cancer) and result in premature morbidity and mortality.

Fitness Management: The Learning Continuum



As daily living becomes more sedentary, it is essential that *students demonstrate the ability to develop and follow a personal fitness plan for lifelong physical activity and well-being* (identified as general learning outcome 2 in Manitoba's combined physical education/health education [PE/HE] curriculum). PE/HE should assist students in developing a pattern of daily and/or regular participation in physical activities and an understanding of how to acquire and maintain optimal personal health and fitness.

The ultimate goal is for each student to value physical activity as a key component of health and to manage his or her fitness through regular participation in physical activity. To assist students in reaching this goal, emphasis should be placed on teaching students how to assess their level of physical activity objectively in terms of the FITT principle (frequency, intensity, time, and type of activity), using assessment strategies such as physical activity logs and personal record forms.

Fitness assessment within this resource emphasizes the goal of motivating students to be physically active and to develop fitness management skills. With this approach, students learn to assess their own fitness, indicate their own position on a fitness development continuum, and determine appropriate activities to develop the health-related fitness components. When administering fitness assessments, teachers focus on the use of fitness management skills, monitoring students' personal progress, creating a positive assessment environment, teaching safety precautions, encouraging self-assessment, providing feedback, and reinforcing effort. The results of fitness assessments should not form part of students' marks.

Fitness assessments are to be administered within the context of the following Learning Continuum for Fitness Management (Figure 1).

Learning Continuum for Fitness Management		
Early Years: Introductory Stage	Middle Years: General Acquisition/ Application Stage	Senior Years: Specific Acquisition/ Application Stage
During the Early Years (Kindergarten to Grade 4), simple fitness concepts are introduced, with the focus on participation in physical activity. Student learning outcomes related to fitness assessment and analysis of health-related fitness components are not included until Grade 4. Instead, assessment and analysis skills emphasize recording or logging how much time is spent participating in physical activity over a period(s) of time.	During the Middle Years (Grades 5 to 8), health-related fitness components are developed through participation in a variety of physical activities and/or specific fitness activities. Students experience and apply the fitness management skills and strategies to maintain/improve personal fitness. They also show a general understanding of fitness knowledge to guide their level of participation and to make informed choices for personal fitness development.	During the Senior Years (Senior 1 to Senior 4), students apply fitness knowledge and skills to design a balanced, personal fitness plan for the development of health-related and/or skill-related fitness components for a specific goal. Students may choose a goal related to general health, basic fitness, healthy heart, fitness for a specific sport, or specific skill performance.

Figure 1. Learning Continuum for Fitness Management.

The stages of the learning continuum are outlined on page 60 of *Kindergarten to Senior 4 Physical Education/Health Education: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes for Active Healthy Lifestyles* (Manitoba Education and Training, 2000).

Document Content and Organization

Guidelines for Fitness Assessment in Manitoba Schools contains the following sections:

- **Section 1: Introduction**—identifies the purpose, background, content, and organization of this teacher resource. It addresses the need for a change in approach to fitness development and presents the learning continuum for fitness management within which fitness assessment is to be administered.
- **Section 2: Principles of Fitness Development**—includes definitions and determinants of physical fitness, outlines the principles of fitness development, and suggests effective strategies for the development of health-related fitness components.
- **Section 3: Health-Related Fitness Assessment**—presents guidelines and administrative suggestions for health-related fitness assessment.
- **Section 4: Health-Related Fitness Assessment Protocols**—provides instructions and protocols for a variety of assessment tasks that can be used to measure the health-related physical fitness components:
 - muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility
 - body composition
 - cardiovascular endurance
- **Appendix: Fitness Management Learning Outcomes**—lists the fitness management learning outcomes identified for Kindergarten to Senior 4 physical education/health education.

Implementation Documents

Suggestions for instruction and assessment related to the fitness management learning outcomes are provided in the following documents:

- *Kindergarten to Grade 4 Physical Education/Health Education: A Foundation for Implementation* (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2001)
- *Grades 5 to 8 Physical Education/Health Education: A Foundation for Implementation* (Manitoba Education and Youth, 2002)
- *Senior 1 and Senior 2 Physical Education/Health Education: A Foundation for Implementation* (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, in development)

Caution

Teachers are advised to treat fitness assessment and analysis of results with sensitivity. The assessment task options outlined in this document serve only as suggested tasks that teachers may use. Ultimately, decisions related to the types of tasks or tests used to measure health-related fitness components are made at the local school/division/district level. When choosing a fitness assessment task, check for reliability, validity, developmental and cultural appropriateness, ease of administration, and safety considerations. Fitness assessment is not recommended prior to Grade 4.