



# Irish Primary PE Association

Cumann Corpoideachais Bunscoile na hÉireann

## The Irish Primary Physical Education Association Position Statement on Fitness Testing in Irish Primary Schools

Controversy surrounds the use of fitness testing of young children as a form of assessment in physical education lessons. Concerns have been expressed over the purpose, practice and outcomes of fitness testing in primary schools (Cale, 2004). For the purpose of this document fitness testing has been defined as measuring health-related physical fitness elements like physical activity, strength, flexibility and body composition. Inappropriate fitness testing raises a number of concerns around measurement techniques, adequate training for those conducting the assessment, development of negative perceptions of physical activity, privacy protection, effective parental information and providing professional referral systems. The IPPEA believes that inappropriate fitness testing and this method of data collection is not an educationally sound practice in physical education lessons. There is no consensus on criteria for minimum fitness standards in children. However, there is a virtual consensus that children should be involved in physical activity on a regular basis. Physical education teaching should encourage active participation, learning and enjoyment by all children, not just the highly skilled. It is likely that the children who are the least successful in sports are most likely to be physically inactive. In recognition of the importance of physical activity as a preventive measure for chronic disease, the IPPEA have developed a position statement emphasising that physical activity and movement have a pivotal role in physical education lessons and at break time.

### The IPPEA believes that

- The use or misuse of commercially available fitness tests such as the beep test is not appropriate for primary school physical education lessons.
- Children should not be weighed by their class teacher or by the children themselves in physical education lessons.
- Children or teachers should not measure children's waist circumference in physical education lessons.

### The IPPEA presents the following recommendations to primary teachers of physical education:

- Assess physical education lessons in accordance with the primary school curriculum assessment guidelines (Department of Education and Science, 1999).
- Provide at least 60 minutes of quality physical education (see link below) each week which promotes maximum opportunities for physical activity within a broad and balanced programme.
- Teach the value of physical activity through fun and regular physical activity and develop the skills and abilities necessary to pursue a lifetime of healthy physical activity regardless of body size.
- Increase the number of physical activity breaks provided each day in school.
- Integrate physical activity and health related content into other curriculum subject lessons including opportunities to integrate health related technology such as pedometers.
- Provide feedback to parents on individual children's skill attainments at parent teacher meetings and in school reports as well as general information in school newsletters.

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### References

- Cale, L. (2004). The appropriateness, validity and reliability of commonly used fitness tests as indicators of children's health status. In Cale, L. Harris, J. editors, *Exercise and young people: issues, implications and initiatives*.
- Irish Primary PE Association, (2010). *Quality Physical Education in Ireland*, <http://www.irishprimarype.com/policy-documents/>
- Department of Education and Science. (1999). *Primary School Curriculum: Physical Education*. Dublin: Government Stationary Office.