

National Association for Kinesiology in Higher Education Position Statement on Youth Fitness Tests and Awards

The National Association for Kinesiology in Higher Education (NAKHE) has held a longstanding leadership role in the fitness of American youth. NAKHE members and Fellows conduct research on topics related to youth physical activity and resulting health-enhancing physical fitness. NAKHE members and Fellows prepare professionals (e.g., physical educators, fitness leaders, educational administrators) who are responsible for the administration of safe, effective, evidence-based physical activity and physical fitness programs for youth and for conducting peer-reviewed assessment of the soundness and efficacy of physical activity and youth fitness programs.

Accordingly, NAKHE endorses the position statements of the National Academy of Kinesiology (NAK)¹ and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)² specifically supporting the following:

- “Initiating efforts to increase youth fitness and better health through promotion and funding for physical education and comprehensive school physical activity programs in U.S. schools¹.”
- Prioritizing “...the use of evidence-based health-related fitness test items and standards and capacity-building strategies to support and enhance school physical education and physical activity programming¹.”
- Including “... essential components such as test administration manuals, parental reports, record keeping support, and guidelines for fitness education²” with health-related fitness testing programs for youth.
- Ensuring that future decisions about youth fitness testing and awards programs are made in consultation with scientific societies and organizations (e.g., NAKHE, NAK, ACSM, SHAPE America) that serve professionals who administer youth fitness tests².

In addition to supporting the statements of NAK and ACSM, NAKHE further recommends that any future youth fitness or physical activity awards programs be supported by evidence of their effectiveness in motivating youth, especially those who are at most risk of poor health. If awards are to be given, they should be possible for all youth who make progress towards meeting personal fitness goals, not just for the physically gifted. As indicated by the Institute of Medicine³ (now the National Academy of Medicine), “fitness is not a competitive sport.”

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NAKHE endorses the position of the ACSM “...that appropriately designed and implemented health-related youth fitness test batteries that use criterion-referenced health standards, can be valuable curricular elements of school physical education programs. Health-related fitness test batteries should be accompanied by fitness education programs for students, instructional and management resources for teachers, and guidelines for parents¹.” NAKHE further recommends that any future awards programs be comprised of empirically supported assessment appropriate for all children.

1. National Academy of Kinesiology. (2026). National Academy of Kinesiology Position Statement on the President’s Council on Sports, Fitness, and Nutrition; the Presidential Fitness Test; and Youth Physical Activity Promotion. *Kinesiology Review*, 15, 121-122. Available online at: <https://nationalacademyofkinesiology.org/nak-position-statement/>
2. American College of Sports Medicine. (2026). Youth Physical Fitness Testing: ACSM Issue Brief. to be completed when posted on the ACSM website.

3. Institute of Medicine. (2012). Fitness measures and health outcomes in youth. National Academies.