



Address the Childhood Obesity Epidemic: Require Fitness Testing for ALL NC Students Grades K - 8 Support HB 1757/SB 1296

WHY Does North Carolina Need Fitness Testing for *ALL* Students Grade K-8?

What would HB 1757/SB 1296 require?

“The State Board of Education (SBE) shall require the use of evidence-based fitness testing for students statewide in grades K through 8.”

What does this mean?

- Every student in grades K - 8 will be able to complete fitness testing that identifies cardiovascular strength, flexibility, muscular strength and endurance, as well as body composition.
- Students, parents and teachers will be able to track student progress as they improve fitness throughout their elementary and middle school years.

Why is requiring statewide fitness testing so important?

- Results would allow for the provision of targeted support to students who are overweight or obese.
- Information would allow study of the impact of obesity on factors affecting dropout rates – absenteeism, reading levels, math testing, disciplinary problems, bullying, and so on.
- Fitness testing gives the physical education departments the ability to track student progress, providing accountability in the same way that other curricula (math, reading and writing) can track improvements in student outcomes.
- Statewide fitness testing provides an on-going critical database for local and state agencies to utilize as organizations across the state attempt to address the childhood obesity epidemic.

Why *NOW* is the right time to make this happen?

- North Carolina ranks 11th in the nation in number of overweight and obese children age 10 - 17.¹ With accurate, individualized data, North Carolina’s teachers, parents, health care providers and others can make targeted and specific changes to improve the health of our students.
- Statewide fitness testing K-8 can be done without cost to taxpayers until 2012 when private grant funds run out. Fitness testing is already taking place in school districts around the state thanks to the current support of the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation and early pilot funding from the Health and Wellness Trust Fund and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation. With support from the General Assembly and the State Board of Education, all students will have the ability to complete fitness testing, work to improve results, and will be able to continue assessments beyond 2012 and for years to come.
- According to a 2008 study by Be Active North Carolina, health care costs of physical inactivity, excess weight and type II diabetes among NC youth in 2006 exceeded \$105 million annually.² By 2015, these costs will rise to \$205 million annually.
- Overweight adolescents are 70% more likely to grow up and enter NC’s workforce as overweight and obese adults.³ An obese adult will have annual medical costs 37.4% higher than their healthy weight counterparts, representing an additional \$732 per obese person, per year.⁴ In addition, an overweight or obese adult will accrue \$250,000 in lost productivity over the course of his or her career.⁵ NC pays now or pays later for the health care of obese children; fitness testing is a step toward halting the obesity epidemic.

Make the health of NC’s children a priority by taking a step toward tackling the childhood obesity epidemic.

Support HB 1757/SB 1296

References

- ¹ Trust for America's Health. (2010). *F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies are Failing in America*. Available at <http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/20100629fasinfatmainreport.pdf>. Accessed on July 1, 2010.
- ² Be Active North Carolina. (2005). *The Economic Cost of Unhealthy Lifestyles in North Carolina*. Retrieved 16 December 2007 from <http://www.beactivenc.org/mediacenter/Summary%20Report.pdf>.
- ³ Telama, R., Yang, X., Laakso, L., and Vilkari, J. (1997). Physical activity in childhood and adolescence as predictor of physical activity in young adulthood. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 13, 317-323.
- ⁴ Finkelstein EA., Fiebelkorn IC, Wang G. National medical spending attributable to overweight and obesity: how much, and who's paying? *Health.Aff.* 2003, Suppl Web Exclusives, W3-219-26.
- ⁵ *Tipping the Scales: How obesity and unhealthy lifestyles have become a weighty problem for the North Carolina economy*. Chenoweth & Associates, p. 12, June 2008 (provided in the Be Active North Carolina Inc. report titled "Tipping the Scales") ; available at http://209.200.69.140/threepcent/download/Tipping_the_Scales.pdf