

STATE STUDY PROVES PHYSICALLY FIT KIDS PERFORM BETTER ACADEMICALLY

SACRAMENTO--State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin today announced that the results of a [recent study](#) conducted by the California Department of Education (CDE) show a distinct relationship between academic achievement and the physical fitness of California's public school students.

"This statewide study provides compelling evidence that the physical well-being of students has a direct impact on their ability to achieve academically," said Eastin. "We now have the proof we've been looking for: students achieve best when they are physically fit. Thousands of years ago, the Greeks understood the importance of improving spirit, mind, and body. The research presented here validates their philosophic approach with scientific validation."

The newly completed research study individually matched scores from the spring 2001 administration of the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (SAT-9), given as part of California's Standardized Testing and Reporting Program, with results of the state-mandated physical fitness test, known as the Fitnessgram, given in 2001 to students in grades five, seven, and nine.

In the study, reading and mathematics scores were matched with fitness scores of 353,000 fifth graders, 322,000 seventh graders, and 279,000 ninth graders. The attached bar graphs for each grade level show a significant relationship between the two types of scores that were matched.

Key findings of the study are:

- Higher achievement was associated with higher levels of fitness at each of the three grade levels measured.
- The relationship between academic achievement and fitness was greater in mathematics than in reading, particularly at higher fitness levels.
- Students who met minimum fitness levels in three or more physical fitness areas showed the greatest gains in academic achievement at all three grade levels.
- Females demonstrated higher achievement than males, particularly at higher fitness levels.

Eastin pointed to physical education as a primary source for promoting physical fitness. "Every student in California should have quality physical education experiences from kindergarten through high school," Eastin said. "The goal of these programs should be to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate in health enhancing physical activity throughout their lives."

The California Education Code mandates physical education for all students in grades one through nine, plus one additional year in high school. Students in grades one through six are required to have 200 minutes of physical education every 10 school days, and students in grades seven through twelve are required to have 400 minutes every 10 school days. Specific recommendations for teachers, students, and their families are available on the CDE Web site at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/cyfsbranch/lsp/health/pecommunications.htm>

Families are encouraged to plan activities that include opportunities for all family members to be physically active together. Health-related fitness assessment results can be used as a tool to help students understand, enjoy, improve, and maintain their physical health and well-being.

In 2001, more than one million students participated in statewide physical performance testing mandated by Assembly Bill 265 in 1995. The law requires that school districts annually administer a physical fitness test designated by the State Board of Education to all fifth, seventh, and ninth graders.

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