

# Fit Kids in Cy-Fair

*How Cy-Fair ISD Combats Childhood Obesity*

*Written by Guest Contributor Jacqui Bontke*





Teaching kids to enjoy exercise at an early age is a great start to a healthy life



Studies show 16% of children between the ages 6 and 19 are obese



Texas state law requires students to be tested on fitness

A classroom fills with 30 students, all from different places and backgrounds, assembled for a common purpose. This course is mandatory, but by the end of this semester the students will leave with an immense knowledge of the body they live in. This class is Health, a required course for all Cy-Fair ISD graduates, and for good reason. Inside this classroom, healthy lifestyles that are preventative of childhood obesity and its long term effects are formed.

### Super Size This

In this specific unit the students are getting a treat. Eyes widen as an independent documentary, already famous in popular culture, plays before them. "Super Size Me," an experiment captured on film where a man eats nothing but McDonald's for every meal of every day for 30 days, is dropping the jaws of high school students. A film maker became inspired after a lawsuit was brought against McDonald's on behalf of two teenaged girls due to their excessive weight gain in a short amount of time.

The film teaches overall healthy habits and the long term effects of unhealthy eating, but one of the most prominent topics discussed in both the film and the classroom is childhood obesity. "I'm a person who is teaching young ladies and gentlemen how to take care of themselves and one day their families," says Crystal Day, Jersey Village High School Health teacher. "It's important that we educate our students as a whole: - mind, body, and soul. When a person is informed, they stand a better chance at making better choices for themselves."

Inspiring teachers like Day are only part of the district's actions to inform students about the long-term effects of childhood obesity, and in turn, decrease unhealthy habits to which students are prone.

### A Health Service

Studies show 16% of children between the age of 6 and 19 are obese, and another 15% are at risk of becoming obese. Cy-Fair

ISD recognizes that students in their schools are suffering from this serious illness. Childhood obesity is an issue for the district since students eat one to two meals a day in school. Jan Jones, the director in Health Services in Cy-Fair ISD, is heading this fight against obesity with students. "We work hard to provide the exercise, healthy food, health information and healthy role models so that Cy-Fair ISD students can identify and make healthy choices in their lives," Jones said.

For those students suffering from childhood obesity and wanting a fighting chance, the Health Services team can provide that foundation. "We also provide students with information, counseling, and community resources to better understand childhood obesity and its relation to lifelong health issues," Jones said.

It's people like Jones that encourage programs like Jump Rope for Heart, Race for the Cure, the American Heart Walk, and the Hope Fun Run. Each of these programs not only teaches students about giving back to the community, but provides them with an opportunity to combat obesity outside the classroom.

### Fitness Final

Inside the classroom, there's another plan of action that continues the fight against obesity. Due to the increase in childhood obesity, a state law was put into place in 2008 that requires students to take a form of fitness test in school. The state chose the Fitness Gram to test students and Cy-Fair ISD is certainly not left out of this requirement. Even the students who aren't involved in a school sport or taking a physical education class are required to take the Fitness Gram. "Students used to have to take two years of physical education. Now they only have to take a year and a half," said Kathryn Downing, Jersey Village High School P.E. Department Chair. "Our society has become such a fast food society. It's not how it was in the old days when families sat together and ate a well-balanced meal. With the Fitness Gram raising health awareness, they are going to start looking better."



Students used to be required to take two years of PE in high school, but now it's only a year and a half

## Get Fit as a Family

Here are some opportunities to make fitness part of your family's lifestyle and to participate together.

### ● *Jump Rope for Heart*

is a program through the American Heart Association that allows students to raise money and show off their jump rope talent. Cy-Fair ISD primarily promotes this program in elementary schools. Visit [aahperd.org/jump](http://aahperd.org/jump).

### ● *Race for the Cure*

is a Global fight against Breast Cancer and will take place in Houston on Saturday, October 3rd 2009. Cy-Fair ISD Teams will be participating in the event. Visit [komen.org](http://komen.org).

### ● *The H.O.P.E. Fun Run*

is a program promoting physical fitness through a healthy lifestyle. H.O.P.E. stands for Health Organization of Physical Educators. In Cy-Fair ISD the run is held annually to raise scholarship funds.



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## Summer Sweat

Healthy habits start in the early years, so health in schools is important. Prevention of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and cancer, all effects of childhood obesity, is a goal in Cy-Fair schools. Now that summer is here, for some students that means the end of their fitness education. "You can workout using everyday activities that you enjoy, such as walking, jogging with your dog, swimming, or taking a class you enjoy like boxing or dance," Day said.

Every child, whether they're at risk of health problems or not, is encouraged to continue their health and fitness education, even after the bell for summer vacation rings. **CFM**

JACQUI BONTKE is a junior at Jersey Village. Her experience on the school paper, *The Peregrine*, has given her aspirations to study journalism after graduation.

## The Fitness Gram

Cy-Fair kids are tested on the Fitness Gram, a program created at the Cooper Institute and designed to test students in schools across the US. It consists of six different tests in four different exercise categories.



- ✓ Aerobic capacity is tested with the PACER, or Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run.
- ✓ Body composition is tested with either a skin fold test measuring how much percent for body a student has or recording the student's body mass index.
- ✓ Muscular strength and endurance is tested with curl ups, push ups, and a trunk lift.
- ✓ Flexibility is test with the sit and reach test measuring how far a student can reach past his or her toes.

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