

# Get Active!

## In the Premier's Youth Fitness Program

*"Making the decision to have a child - it is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body."*

—Elizabeth Stone

As parents we want what is best for our children. One of our deepest hopes is to provide them with all the love, knowledge, and opportunity they need to allow them to succeed and have a life even better than our own. However, the current generation of children will be the first generation in decades to have a life expectancy shorter than their parents. This is due to a multitude of lifestyle factors, including: sedentary behaviors, inactivity, and poor nutrition habits. Simply put, our kids are moving less and less with each generation that goes by – and this is having a detrimental effect on their health.

The Bermuda 2014 STEPS Survey revealed that 74.6% of Bermudians are overweight, with 34.4% being obese. Knowing that more than 30% of children and adolescents are overweight, the entire community must make a concerted effort to encourage our children and families to be more active. The Premier's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition was formed in May 2015 to develop initiatives aimed at helping Bermuda's population to improve its health and wellness. One of the key initiatives developed by the Council is the Premier's Youth Fitness Program.

The Premier's Youth Fitness Program (PYFP) is a school-based program for students from P5 / Grade 4 - S3 / Grade 11. It utilizes state of the art fitness testing via heart rate monitors and the Spirit System. The Spirit System is designed to be a non-competitive health-related fitness assessment based on scientifically established Healthy Fitness Zone standards. The program will help schools evaluate and evolve their physical education programming into an education experience that supports the whole child. The testing enables physical education teachers to collect both biometric and fitness assessment data of students. The assessments will provide students and parents with an age appropriate fitness profile. The profiles will



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highlight your child's areas of strength and provide recommendations for physical activity options for those areas that need improvement.

The PYFP also implemented the Spark Curriculum in all government schools, which will complement the Spirit System and fitness testing taking place. The Spark Curriculum will also standardize physical education and ensure children are receiving a complete and adequate health education across Bermuda. The children have been provided an activity log where they can record any physical activity they engage in outside of school. Children who accrue outstanding levels of fitness minutes for the year will earn fantastic prizes, sponsored by BF&M, which will be awarded at the Premier's Champions Awards ceremony. With any new challenge, your child will need support and encouragement to reach new heights of success. But how can you get





involved in the PYFP and increase your child's activity levels?

In September 2017, thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Bermuda Olympic Association, and the hard work of the PYFP Committee Members from the Department of Health, Department of Education and BF&M Insurance Group, Healthy Habit daily planners were provided to all students from P5 to S3 in the public school system and many private schools as well. These planners have been designed to work in tandem in the program and reinforce development and maintenance of healthy lifestyle habits. The planners contain information on nutrition and fitness tips, fun challenges, and interactive activities. The planners will also be utilized as a tool by both teachers and parents to keep health and fitness at the forefront of their child's daily activities.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to be involved in their child's participation and may complete physical activities with their child as s/he progresses from one challenge level within the PYFP to the next. Community sports groups and the Bermuda National Sport Governing Bodies are partnering with the Council to engage students in their respective activities at no charge or a nominal fee. Physical Education teachers and parents are charged with encouraging children and teens to join the sport/physical activity of their choice and each sports group will sign off on each child's activity log. According to the Healthy Schools coordinator, Marie Beach-Johnson, the initiatives

will introduce children to different sports and activities, while encouraging them to gain higher fitness levels. "It's to really expose them to other physical activity options, and then they can better choose which physical activities they like." If you are interested in the PYFP and what it has to offer your child, feel free to visit [stepitup.bm](http://stepitup.bm) to find out more about the program.

Below are some tips to help start getting your child more active today:

1. **Get interested.** Show an interest in any activities your child likes and encourage them to try out new physical activities.
2. **Don't drive as much.** Walk rather than drive and encourage your kids to cycle and walk where possible. Try to integrate movement into your everyday lives- it can be as simple as just parking a little farther away and walking a little more to your destination.
3. **Help kids to be sporty.** Playing sport is a great way for children to be active. If your kids don't like traditional sports, there are lots of alternatives: paddle boarding, kayaking, martial arts, golf, dance, or archery to name a few.
4. **Get active yourself!** You are your child's most important role model – so if you are a couch potato, don't expect your kids to be active! Your habits will rub off on your kids.
5. **Be active together.** Why not bond with the kids by doing some physical activity together? Some great options are swimming, walking the railway trails, playing tennis, or even table tennis. It's important that you set a good example and your engagement will improve your own health as well!

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