

Georgia Shape

An Innovation Station Emerging Practice

Purpose: This document is intended to support MCH professionals to implement a practice found in Innovation Station. This resource provides the information needed to replicate the practice and is divided into two sections: the first section provides a high-level overview of the practice while the second section describes how to implement the practice. For additional information on any of the content provided below, please reach out to the practice contact located at the bottom of this document.

Section I: Practice Overview

Location:	Georgia (Statewide)	Title V/MCH Block Grant Measures Addressed
Category:	Emerging	NPM #8: Percent of children ages 6 through 11 years and adolescents ages 12 through 17 years who are physically active at least 60 minutes per day. NPM #15: Percent of children 0 through 17 years who are adequately insured.
Date Submitted:	05/2014; updated 04/24/2020	

Practice Description

Georgia Shape continues its efforts in increasing the number of students in the Healthy Fitness Zone. Other objectives of Georgia Shape include reaching disparate populations, increasing the aerobic capacity measure of Georgia’s youth, increasing the breastfeeding rate across Georgia, and increasing the number of early care centers that excel in nutrition and physical activity measures.

In decreasing childhood obesity measures, the overall goal of the initiative is to improve the health of adolescents in Georgia by improving physical activity and nutrition outcomes. This is completed through the offering of trainings, programs, services, assistance and opportunity.

Purpose

Georgia Shape is a statewide, multi-agency, multi-dimensional initiative of Governor Nathan Deal that brings together governmental, philanthropic, academic and business communities to address childhood obesity statewide in school, health care and community settings. Georgia Shape began with the passage of the Student Health and Physical Education (SHAPE) Act in 2009 mandating physical fitness testing for all students enrolled in physical education. The expansion to a multi-stakeholder collaborative effort using a collective impact framework, began in 2012. Since its insertion, fitness and obesity rates have improved among some groups of children and physical activity and nutrition interventions, programs, and environmental changes continue to contribute to the program’s success.

In 2008, Georgians spent \$2.4 billion on the direct medical costs of obesity and lost productivity from disease, disability and death. Furthermore, obesity-related hospitalizations of Georgia children aged 2–19 years increased 338% over the eleven-year period from 1999 to 2010.

Prior to the launch of the Georgia Shape initiative, Georgia ranked 2nd in the United States in prevalence of childhood obesity. As of 2013 and currently, Georgia ranks 17th in the nation for childhood obesity. Currently, 52% of middle school students and 43% of high school students in Georgia currently meet the CDC recommendations for physical activity. There was a decline of 10% (2013 – 32%, 2019 – 22%) among high school students who watched television for three or more hours on an average school day, with a significant decline from years prior to the insertion of Georgia Shape (2007 – 2019) to current. However, there was an increase of 5% (2013 – 36%, 2019 – 41%) among high school students who played video or computer games or used a computer three or more hours, including things such as Xbox, PlayStation, iPad or tablet, smartphone, social media for something that was not school work on an average school day, with a significant incline from 2005 (19%) to 2019 (41%). Only 14% of high school students in Georgia consume three or more servings of vegetables a day.

The program goal is accomplished by the following objectives:

- Maintaining a benchmark measurement of fitness among GA students through the Fitnessgram standardized assessment
- Using the CDC's breast-feeding report card measures to inform current breast feeding and early care work
- Increasing children's (and families') knowledge of their current health-related fitness levels
- Increasing children/family's capacity to develop and implement strategies for personal improvement

In addition to the objectives above, the program also includes high-impact initiatives:

- Power Up for 30 is a statewide physical activity program for Georgia's elementary and middle schools
- The Georgia Shape physical activity and nutrition grants program provides funding and technical assistance to schools to start or enhance their wellness policies and related activities.
- Recognition programs for schools, early care centers, students and birthing hospitals on best practices in school wellness, adherence to nutrition and physical activity best practices in early care centers, FitnessGram outcomes for students, and supporting the work of hospitals towards achieving 'Baby Friendly' status.

This is a statewide initiative. The target audience is all Georgia's youth, aged 0-18.

Practice Foundation

Georgia Shape aims to encourage healthy behaviors and to promote individual health through coordinated statewide policy and system-level efforts by offering resources to educators, healthcare providers, families, and individuals. This ecological approach targets multiple influences on health and aims to create a supportive and coordinated environment for increasing physical activity and improving nutrition. This initiative is based on the Transtheoretical Model (behavior change). Georgia Shape encourages small, achievable health related behavior changes across all Georgia populations from infants to adults.

Georgia Shape partners work through a collective impact framework to achieve the common goals of better fitness and decreased rates of childhood obesity among school-aged children in Georgia. To combat childhood obesity, partners use the shared measures of the FitnessGram fitness assessment, statewide participation rates in free and reduced-cost school meals, and documented achievement of best practices in preschool and school settings through various awards programs. Georgia's Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) is also used as the model for school physical activity program implementation.

Georgia Shape's various strategies, programs, and initiatives are divided into five sub-groups: Data and Evaluation, Nutrition, Physical Activity, Marketing and Communications, and Healthcare. Each sub-group is comprised of council members and academic, community, and subject matter experts, with more than 130 professionals across the state participating. The collaborative support from high-level leaders has eliminated many barriers and allowed state agencies and other partners to work together towards common goals.

Core Components

The goal of the Georgia Shape program is to improve statewide healthy fitness zone measures among school-aged children. This work is done by assessing school-aged children on an annual basis with the provisions of the core components outlined below. These core components include FitnessGram training and assessment, breastfeeding strategies, and before, during and after school policy, system and environmental change program approaches.

Program Activities

Georgia Shape has several strategies and activities to promote physical activity and health for children and adolescents that are based on national programs, guidelines and evidence-based recommendations.

FITNESSGRAM: Foundationally, Georgia Shape begins with a basic, benchmark measurement of fitness among students across Georgia. This is assessed through an online assessment tool, FITNESSGRAM. The FITNESSGRAM assessment tool is used for Georgia Shape's annual standardized fitness assessment which objectively evaluates five aspects of health-related fitness, including aerobic capacity, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and body composition using. It also generates reports providing valuable individual, school, and state-level data to empower students, parents, schools, and the community to best assess the current health needs for children in Georgia.

- All public-school physical education teachers (K-12) in Georgia receive professional testing protocol and data entry training for the FITNESSGRAM assessment. They are supplied with the necessary equipment, software and technical support needed to conduct the assessment in their school. This is provided through Georgia Shape. School and student participants are also eligible for the Governor's award and various recognition programs, which provides an exciting incentive for students, teachers and schools.

Strategies to Increase Breastfeeding: Strategies to increase breastfeeding duration rates in Georgia include sharing *The Business Case for Breastfeeding* broadly with the Georgia business community, encouraging them to adopt policies that support breastfeeding mothers. In addition, implementing a voluntary program to recognize birthing hospitals (the 5STAR Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative) that have taken the steps to promote, protect, and support

breastfeeding in their organization. In addition, website messaging, WIC training for Registered Dietitians and projects and partnerships with the Georgia chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition are used to promote resources, including an online repository of breastfeeding supports in accordance with geographical location, Zipmilk.Georgia.

School Based Initiatives (Ages 6-18):

- Power Up for 30 is a statewide physical activity program that trains educators to effectively add 30 minutes of daily physical activity for every student. This is done in addition to formalized physical education class. Power Up for 30 also provides technical assistance, resources and ideas for additional physical activity before, during and after school in a way that adheres to each school's needs.
- The Georgia Shape Physical Activity and Nutrition Grantee program is a technical assistance-based program that provides public schools (elementary, middle and high) with expert advisement and financial resources in planning and implementing wellness policy and programming specific for their school.
- Georgia Shape promotes participation in the Georgia Safe Routes to School program to expand implementation of safe routes to school while increasing students daily physical activity levels.
- Georgia Shape participates in the Georgia Farm to School program and Georgia Farm to School Alliance to expand the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.
- Georgia Shape continues to strength partnerships across the state in support of overall child wellness.

Practice Activities

N/A

Evidence of Effectiveness (e.g. Evaluation Data)

Current evaluation data collected includes the five assessment items from the FITNESSGRAM Assessment:

- PACER or One-Mile Run (measures aerobic capacity)
- Push-Ups (measures upper body muscular strength/endurance)
- Curl-Ups (measures abdominal muscular strength/endurance)
- Back-Saver Sit and Reach (measures flexibility)
- Body Mass Index (measures body composition: appropriateness of weight relative to height)

The statewide *Annual Fitness Assessment Program* is conducted each school year. Health-related fitness assessments using FITNESSGRAM is implemented in physical education classes across Georgia.

Goals for the Georgia Annual Fitness Assessment program are to:

- Maintain the "FITNESSGRAM Georgia" website
- Ensure physical education teachers are adequately trained to administer the fitness assessment, collect data, and utilize the FITNESSGRAM Georgia website
- Distribute equipment required to conduct the FITNESSGRAM assessment

- Administer the fitness assessment to all students in physical education classes taught by certified physical education teachers in compliance with O.C.G.A. §20-2-777
- Provide parents with individual fitness assessment information utilizing the FITNESSGRAM reporting program
- Gather Georgia’s aggregate health related fitness data

The fitness assessment requires all students in physical education classes taught by a certified physical education teacher shall be tested. As identified in Figure 1 below, 89% of Georgia’s 210 school districts assessed students and utilized the FITNESSGRAM Georgia program to enter data to generate individual student reports for parents and guardians.

Out of Georgia’s 2,302 schools, 94% completed fitness assessments. Fitness scores were reported for physical education students from 2172 schools, representing 73% of the total population of students.

In the 2018-19 school year 1,157,375 students in grades 1-12 participated in the Georgia fitness assessment. This represents students enrolled in physical education classes.

Figure 1: 2018-2019 Fitness Assessment Completion Numbers

Local School Districts 212	Local School Districts Reporting Fitness Assessment 203	Percentage 95.7%
Schools 2,303	Schools Completing BC Fitness Assessment 1,813	Percentage 78.7%
Total Enrollment Grades 1-12 1,583,497**	Students with reported BC Fitness Scores 1,126,314	Percentage 71.1% *

*73% of total student population grades 1-12. Georgia students in grades 6-12 are not required to be enrolled in physical education every school year.

** March 2019 FTE

- Measures below represent assessed student populations from the 2018-2019 academic year.
 - Body Mass Index of the student population (grades 4 -12) assessed that falls within the HFZ is currently 58% for males (57%) and females (59%).
 - Georgia's Aerobic Capacity Fitnessgram assessed student population (grades 4-12) currently in the HFZ is 55% (males) and 45% (females).

An annual report is provided to the Office of the Governor and can be found on the [Georgia Department of Education](#)'s website for reference.

Replication

Georgia Shape has been presented at several conferences, including:

- American College of Sports Medicine
- Annual Georgia Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Conference
- Annual Georgia PTA Summit
- Annual OBGYN Conference
- Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
- Georgia Association of Educational Leaders Conference
- National Active Living Conference
- National Physical Activity Plan Congress
- Obesity Week
- Southern Obesity Summit
- State of Public Health (Georgia)

Georgia Shape continues to consult with representatives from various states and has published in peer reviewed journals, including:

- Journal of Georgia Public Health Association
- Public Health Reports

Section II: Practice Implementation

Internal Capacity

N/A

Collaboration/Partners

Led by the state public health agency, a strong network of partners has been built to support Georgia Shape and its various strategies. These partners provide funding, training, data centralization, reward/recognition and a sustainable plan for long-term results.

A full list of partners can be found at: www.georgiashape.org/story/our-partners.

Practice Cost

Georgia Shape has leveraged funding from state funds and federal grants and multiple partners to carry out the initiative's collective activities.

Practice Timeline

N/A

Resources Provided

The Georgia Shape digital portal has many resources, including:

- Extensive resources around fitness testing implementation (using FITNESSGRAM) and physical activity and nutrition program implementation
- Resources for students, families, and schools on healthy eating and exercise.
- Trainings, videos and webinars

For more information, visit www.georgiashape.org, Instagram, Twitter: @GeorgiaShape, Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/georgiaSHAPE/>

Lessons Learned

State agency partners are instrumental to statewide buy-in. Our partnerships with the Department of Education, Department of Early Care and Learning and the Department of Agriculture and of has been instrumental to Georgia Shape's success. The private/public partnerships have also strengthened the program and increased capacity.

Assets

Georgia Shape builds on the success of the Georgia School Health and Physical Education (S.H.A.P.E) Act that the legislature adopted in 2009, requiring each local school district to conduct an annual fitness assessment program for all public school students in first through 12th grade enrolled in school physical education classes. In 2011, the Georgia Office of the Governor, under the leadership of Governor Nathan Deal, identified childhood obesity prevention as a state priority and recognized the need to bring together partners to support implementing the SHAPE Act in schools. The Georgia Department of Education, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the Georgia Office of the Governor, Georgia Department of Public Health, Atlanta Falcons Youth Foundation, and Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation forged together as the Georgia SHAPE Partnership to create a reward and recognition program, support public-private funding, training, and insure data centralization. This partnership helped Georgia Shape to quickly expand from an initial five-county pilot program to implementation statewide by the 2011-12 academic year.

Challenges

Like past challenges, continually overcoming the negative attention fitness testing is often faced with has continued to surface. Through piloting the assessment and implementation, Georgia Shape was able to effectively train teachers and educators to administer the assessment in a way that did not promote embarrassment or attach a negative connotation to fitness or fitness levels. By promoting the "Healthy Fitness Zone" and not a culture of pass or fail, educators across the state are trained and able to promote health rather than fear, fatness promotion, and/or negative obesity labeling. Training has evolved and is updated with each training cohort to reflect the direct needs of the students, teachers and schools.

Overcoming Challenges

Georgia Shape continues to lean on its four multi-group goal-based strategies. These strategies allow all Georgians or all ages to create change in small, meaningful ways. These four strategies include:

- Promote increased physical activity through role modeling and encouraging others.
- Create and develop an atmosphere of health rather than fear, negative weight promotion, and/or negative obesity labeling.
- Emphasize and promote real, whole, local foods including breastfeeding to all populations with an emphasis on disparate populations.
- Encourage small, achievable health related behavior changes across all Georgia populations.

Next Steps

The Georgia Shape program is a long-term strategy to reduce childhood obesity. The Department of Public Health and Georgia Shape partners have leveraged federal and external funding and resources to sustain this initiative for future implementation.

Evaluative efforts around training and program implementation will provide insight into the benefits of a decentralized approach for expansion. Increasing our capacity, working through existing statewide public health infrastructures will allow the program to increase reach and impact on disparate populations across the state. As the program assesses physical activity and nutritional assets statewide, a formative evaluation will lend additional insights into the impact of Georgia Shape programming on adolescents across the state. This data will be used to facilitate partnership and stakeholder meetings, distribution and allocation of resources and future program planning and implementation.

Practice Contact Information

For more information about this practice, please contact:

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