

Each year the Executive Board of the Suffolk Zone Chapter of NYS AHPERD hosts a fit club competition for elementary students in 4th and 5th grade . The team competition was created to offer students and Health and Physical Education professionals across Suffolk County an opportunity to promote Health and PE. The event is free of cost for all schools. In addition, the event was created for children and is run by children. Students are trained to be the referees, score keepers, greeters, and coaches. We feel it is important to offer all students the opportunities to take leadership positions when they are young and to get involved in helping at community events. In addition, the event focuses on fitness. As a society, we offer students many opportunities to join sports teams and clubs but some students are better at “fitness based” activities then “sport based” activities. These students are not being offered many programs or activities in school and may not have the financial means to join an outside program. This event gives those students an opportunity to show off their skill set and promotes fitness for life.

In addition to being fun, the event challenges them physically and mentally. It is an opportunity to test their grit and perseverance in low pressure situations. What I mean by that is, if we do not give them opportunities to test their mental fortitude and grit while they are young, in situations that have no major consequences if they fail, then they will not have the experience to dig deep and persevere when the stakes of life are higher. We need to give the students opportunities to fall and fail, to dig deep, strive, and rise above.

The events in the Fit Club competition test the students’ fitness on all 5 Health-Related Physical Fitness components and all 6 Skills-Related Fitness Components. By making fitness fun, exciting and challenging, students will continue to stay fit which will lead to improved self-esteem, prevent obesity, and decrease the risk of serious illnesses later in life. A win-win!

2017 was the pilot program. We had 12 teams come to Lincoln Ave. elementary school and compete. Each team consisted of eight 4th grade girls (6 athletes plus 2 subs), eight 4th grade boys, eight 5th grade boys, and eight 5th grade girls. A total of 32 athletes per team and 12 teams (384 athletes). Plus, 42 elementary students were trained to be the referees, score runners, scorekeepers, greeters, and coaches. The event involved 426 students our first year and it was a success! They compete only against other students from their own grade level and of their same gender. Each grade/gender has their own competition and receives points according to how many tasks/rounds they complete. The points for each competition then go towards their overall team total. For more specific details as to why the program was created, please read “[The Birth of the Suffolk Zone Fit Club](#)” which was featured in PHE America.

In 2018, we doubled the event to include 24 teams. In 2019, we increased the event to include 31 teams. Now the event included over 1,100 students. In 2020, we increased it to 41 teams (over 1,500 athletes) but due to covid, we had to cancel the event. In 2021, we created a virtual “Fit Club”. Here is the link. https://youtu.be/N6lSIRMIC_A We wanted last year to be extra special for the students since Covid took away so much. We wanted to make a Fit Club where ALL students, in ALL grades (K-12), whether they are home schooled, all virtual, hybrid, or in-person, could be part of the fun.

This year, the hope is to go back to an in-person event. If you are interested in participating in this years Fit Club, please contact Beth Bolger (ebolger@sayvilleschools.org). Visit https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=elizabeth+bolger for fit club videos.