

Local kids more fit than peers

By KATHY KREIGER
Sentinel staff writer

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SANTA CRUZ — Local students may be in better physical shape than other California students, but less than half meet minimum state standards of physical fitness, according to test results just released by the Department of Education.

Statewide, only 17 percent of fifth graders, 21 percent of seventh graders, and 26 percent of ninth graders were considered physically fit.

Santa Cruz County kids did significantly better, with 24 percent of fifth graders, 36 percent of seventh graders, and 43 percent of ninth graders able to pass muster.

The tests are given each spring to fifth, seventh and ninth grade students.

To be considered fit, a student must pass at least four of the five tests given. Sit-reaches, which measure flexibility; situps, pullups, a one-mile walk run, and a skin-fold test which measures percentage of body fat are the tests used to measure overall fitness.

Roy Nelson, principal of Branciforte Junior High School, said Branciforte's seventh-graders have improved overall on scores from 1989. This year, more than two-thirds of students passed each activity except pullups, which only a third could pass.

Last year's test results prompted

the school to change PE activities to reflect test objectives, he said. Students run daily, with weekly timed runs to help them set and monitor goals.

Nelson said he is pleased with the scores, except for the pullups. He said teachers and administrators would brainstorm ideas to improve students' arm strength.

In general, pullups were students' weakest area, with only about 40 percent countywide able to meet minimum standards. An exception was at Bonny Doon Elementary School, where a whopping 95 percent of the 31 fifth graders

passed last spring's pullup test.

Watsonville's E. A. Hall Middle School also scored well, with passing scores at the 80 percent level, except for pullups, which only half the students could pass.

Charles Greenleaf, Hall's assistant principal, credits his school's high scores to an outstanding sports program and daily calisthenics. Also, said Greenleaf, they start working with kids as sixth graders, and spend extra time working with kids who have difficulties.

Greenleaf said his coaches were critical of the skin-fold test to determine whether kids are too fat,

and did not use it. "Even after in-service training, coaches would often get different measurements. They felt it was difficult to get an accurate reading," said Greenleaf.

Branciforte's Nelson, commenting on the test, said, "We all recognize the value of physical fitness. It goes hand in hand with academic fitness."

An ironic footnote to the test scores was given Monday by state Schools Superintendent Bill Honig. Announcing cuts in state education programs, Honig said the state's physical fitness exam for fifth, seventh, and ninth graders will be cut from the budget.

Fitness test results for county

Test results show the percentage of students who passed four of five state standards.

| District | Grade | Pct. 1989 | Pct. 1990 | District | Grade | Pct. 1989 | Pct. 1990 |
|------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-------|-----------|-----------|
| Statewide | 5 | 15 | 17 | Pajaro | 5 | 30 | 23 |
| | 7 | 20 | 21 | | 7 | 48 | 43 |
| | 9 | 26 | 26 | | 9 | 44 | 42 |
| SC County | 5 | 25 | 24 | San Lorenzo | 5 | 15 | 21 |
| | 7 | 35 | 36 | | 7 | 15 | 19 |
| | 9 | 43 | 43 | | 9 | 42 | 41 |
| Bonny Doon | 5 | 26 | 26 | SC City | 5 | 27 | 35 |
| | 7 | 22 | 36 | | 7 | 34 | 46 |
| | 9 | 8 | 21 | | 9 | 42 | 44 |
| Live Oak | 5 | 8 | 21 | Scotts Valley | 5 | 17 | 23 |
| | 7 | 14 | 41 | | 7 | 17 | 15 |
| | 9 | 14 | 41 | | 9 | 27 | 18 |
| Mountain Pacific | 5 | 6 | -- | Soquel | 5 | 27 | 18 |
| | 7 | 33 | 20 | | 7 | 24 | 12 |