

# Flexibility



Dear Parents or Caregivers,

Flexibility is the ability to move muscles and joints through their full range of motion. Having good flexibility of the hip and low back helps to reduce injuries to muscles and joints, and prevent lower back pain. A regular stretching program will reduce tension, stress, and increase flexibility.

Below is a description of the Hip/Low Back Flexibility CAAP Assessments used to determine your child's level of flexibility. The assessments involve stretching three different muscle groups: hamstrings, quadriceps, and low back. Students are required to demonstrate all elements of form while holding each stretch for at least 10 seconds. The results of these Flexibility CAAP Assessments will be on your child's December report card.

## **Wall Stretch (hamstrings - back of the thigh)**

Sit against the wall with knees bent. Position the feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart. Place the head, shoulders, and buttocks against the wall. Slowly straighten the knees, while keeping toes pointed. Fully straighten the legs while keeping the head, shoulders, and buttocks against the wall. Hold the stretch still for at least 10 seconds. To achieve healthy standards, the upper body and the legs form a 90-degree angle while the knees are completely straight.

## **Quad Stretch (quadriceps - front of the thigh)**

Lie on the stomach with the legs extended and the head resting on the hands. Knees should be together at all times. Bend one knee so the heel moves as close to the buttocks as possible. Hold the stretch for at least 10 seconds. To achieve healthy standards, the angle formed by the thigh, knee, and shin is 40-degrees or less. Repeat with the other leg.

## **Sit and Lean (low back)**

Sit on the edge of a chair. Place feet flat on the floor, a little more than shoulder-width apart. Knees are at a 90-degree angle. Place hands behind the lower back, grabbing arms close to the elbows. Lean forward as far as possible, keeping the feet on the floor, buttocks on the chair, and the arms behind the back. Hold the stretch still for at least 10 seconds. To achieve healthy standards the front of the shoulders touch the knees.

**It is important for children to learn that improving flexibility will help reduce injuries to muscles and joints, and prevent lower back pain.**

## Suggestions to Improve Flexibility

Flexibility may be the easiest fitness component to improve. A daily stretching program that concentrates on the hamstrings, quadriceps, and low back will improve the health of your child. **Each stretch should be held in a static position for at least 20-30 seconds. Remember to stretch to a point of tension, not pain.** To improve flexibility, perform slow stretches daily. This allows the muscles to relax and lengthen.

The following are examples of additional stretches to help improve flexibility.

**Single Leg Stretch** – Sit on the floor with left leg straight and toe pointed up. Place sole of right foot against the inner thigh of the left leg. Lean forward as far as possible, reach for toes with both hands, and pull chest toward the left knee. Hold for 30 seconds. Switch leg positions and repeat the procedure with the other leg. **(hamstrings & low back muscles)**

**Standing Quad Stretch** – Stand with left side toward a wall. Place left hand on the wall for support. Bend the left knee and reach back with the right arm, grabbing the foot at the instep. Gently pull the left foot upward toward the buttocks, keeping the knee pointed toward the ground. Turn around and repeat the procedure with the other leg. **(quadriceps muscles)**

**Crossed Leg and Lean Stretch** – Sit on the floor with legs crossed, placing hands behind the lower back, grasping both forearms close to the elbows. Slowly lean forward as far as possible, trying to place the shoulders on the knees. **(low back muscles.)**

**The Cat** - Place hands and knees on the floor, elbows fully extended. Place hands beneath the shoulders, knees under hips, and back straight. Slowly arch the spine, moving the chin towards the chest, while tightening the abdominal muscles. Return to original position and repeat. **(low back muscles)**

**Knee Raises** – Lie on the back with knees bent. Bend left knee and bring the thigh toward the chest. Place both hands around the back of the left thigh. Pull the left thigh as close to the chest as possible. Switch leg positions and repeat the procedure with the other leg. **(gluteus maximus & low back muscles)**

	Single Leg	Quad Stretch	Crossed Leg	The Cat	Knee Raises
WEEK 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEEK 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEEK 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEEK 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>