

# The Korea Herald

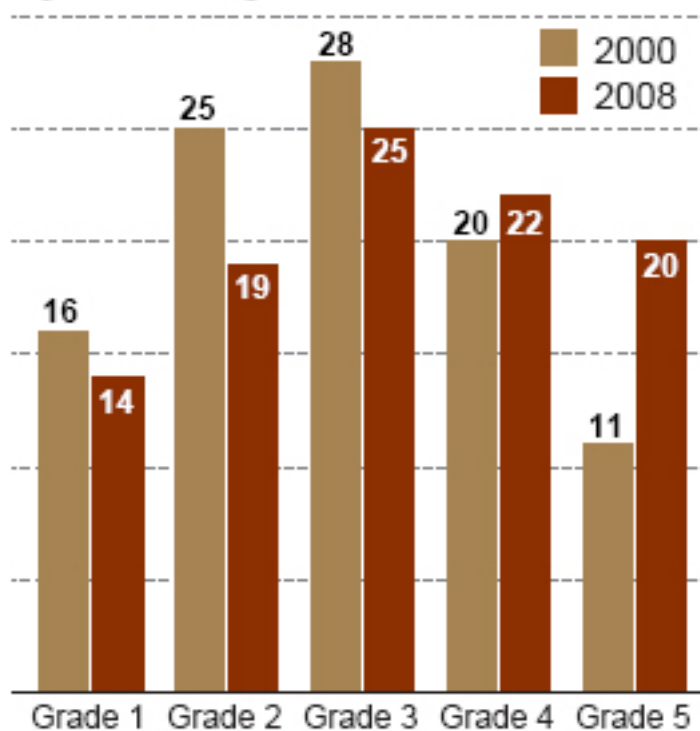


## National

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### Students` fitness deteriorates

**Percentage of students  
by fitness grades (Unit: %)**



\*Grade 1 is the strongest on the five-grade scale.

Source: Education Ministry

Korean students at elementary and secondary schools are less fit than they were nine years ago, according to fitness test results.

Government data suggested that the physical fitness of third-grade

high school students, in particular, who are under stress for competitive college entrance, was at a serious level.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology submitted the data - showing the results of the fitness tests conducted at 468 schools nationwide from 2000-2008 - to the National Assembly for the parliamentary inspection of the administration.

The tests included sit-ups, push-ups, a 50-meter dash, a 1,600-meter run and a standing long jump. There are five fitness grades with grade 1 being the strongest and grade 5 being the weakest.

The percentage of students in the top two grades was 33

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percent last year, compared with 41 percent in 2000. Students who belonged to grade 4 and grade 5 accounted for 42 percent, an increase from 31 percent in 2000.

Some experts ascribed the reduction in student fitness to the current educational system, which puts undue emphasis on preparing for college entrance. Some also said that the fact that physical education is an optional subject could discourage students from developing their fitness.

"Physical education is not a mandatory subject, thus for those who have not chosen the subject, there are fewer opportunities to engage in physical activity particularly in an environment where they should focus on certain subjects that they need to score high on for college entrance," said Lee Chung-hwan, a physical education teacher at Angok High School in Goyang, Gyeonggi Province.

Ministry officials also presumed that students' physical strength has weakened partly due to their eating habits.

On average, students recorded 9.39 seconds in the 50-meter dash last

year, slower than the 9.22 seconds of 2000. The average number of push-ups last year was 30, a decrease from 31.27 in 2000. The average number of sit-ups last year was 34, down from 35.44 in 2000. In the 1,600-meter run, students, on average recorded 8 minutes and 9 seconds last year, compared with 7 minutes and 32 seconds in 2000.

The percentage of male third-grade high school students who were assessed as having grade 4 and grade 5 fitness has increased from 22 percent in 2000 to 49 percent last year. The percentage of those students who made grade 1 and grade 2 has decreased from 53 percent in 2000 to 28 percent last year.

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