

# Students train like astronauts in Mission X challenge

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Fourth-grade students in the College Station Independent School District (CSISD) in Texas have completed six weeks of a NASA health and fitness challenge known as "Mission X: Train Like an Astronaut."

The United States, Netherlands, Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Colombia, Spain and United Kingdom hosted teams for the first Mission X challenge. NASA selected CSISD to participate on behalf of the U.S., along with 3,700 other [students](#) from more than 25 cities worldwide. The initiative supports the goals of the President's Council on Physical Fitness, Sports and Nutrition, and First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" program announced in February 2010. Both efforts are designed to encourage Americans to adopt a healthy lifestyle that includes regular physical activity and good nutrition.

At a final event Thursday at College Station Tiger Stadium in Texas, NASA Associate Administrator for Education and former astronaut Leland Melvin and astronaut Rick Linnehan shared their space travel experience with students. They also discussed the importance of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) studies.

"The physical fitness portion of Mission X is vital, because fit kids can make better students," Melvin said. "But, the team-building aspect is essential to what we do at NASA, from constructing the International Space Station to launching complex science missions. Helping students excel in science and engineering and encouraging them to pursue those careers helps NASA develop future explorers, who will reach higher and

take us on the next grand exploration challenge."

At the finale to Mission X, students also toured the "Driven To Explore" NASA trailer and participated in exploration-inspired activities. Certificates of participation were presented to each of the schools.

"Mission X is all about inspiring and educating our youth to live a healthy lifestyle, with a focus on improving their overall daily physical activity," said Dennis Grounds, NASA manager of the Human Research Program at Johnson. "All of the countries involved saw this as a national concern. The program was an outstanding success due to a truly inspired effort by the [NASA](#) team, the European Space Agency team and the national space agencies of France and Germany."

During the six-week Mission X, participants completed physical activities modeled after the real-life training requirements of humans traveling in space. Students practiced teamwork while participating in training missions targeting strength, endurance, coordination and balance. They also gained an understanding of the science behind nutrition and physical fitness by participating in hands-on activities involving human energy requirements, hydration and bone strength.

Mission X enabled several space agencies and various partner institutions to collaborate to address the quality of health and fitness education and challenge students to be more physically active. The program increased awareness of the importance of lifelong fitness and its vital role in human performance for exploration. As a result, students may be motivated to pursue careers in STEM fields.

The global challenge is coordinated online, where countries can post updates and submit points. The public is invited to track the progress of the teams. The 18 core activities of the challenge are available for download at the site in seven languages.

**More information:** [www.trainlikeanastronaut.org/](http://www.trainlikeanastronaut.org/)

Provided by JPL/NASA

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