

Exercising Body, Mind

by By Todd R. Hansen/Tri-County Newspapers
10-19-2010 www.orland-press-register.com



Educators at Mill Street School hope a step back into the simpler times of hop-scotch and jacks will prepare their young students for a complex future that could include such things as organic computers.

The Orland K-2 school, battling to improve their students' academic performances, unveiled an exercise course this week designed to improve cognitive skills.

It is a mind-body integration program," explained Steve Piluso, an adaptive physical education specialist for the Glenn County Office of Education

He has been using the S'cool Moves program with special education students for more than four years, and said his students have shown improvement.

Essentially, the program — designed by former teacher Debra E.M. Wilson of Redding — emphasizes particular physical activities that are shown also to improve brain activities.

Piluso said two four-station courses were set up on campus. Posters show the activities to follow, and there are about 25 activities that will be rotated throughout the course.

"A lot of the stuff that is done is what kids used to do on their own, but don't do anymore, like hop-scotch and jacks," Piluso said.



The program is focused on posture, getting the left side and right side of the brain working in the same activities and eye-tracking exercises.

Piluso said the program has been used throughout the county — in special and general education settings — but he believes this is the first time an actual course has been set up on a campus.

"And hopefully, we will see it in other parts of the county, too," Piluso said.

Mary Rock, president of the Parents Club and a teacher's aide, said the project almost didn't happen because of continuous vandalism of the posters and special station boxes that hold them.

She is hoping that now the courses are set up, neighbors of the school and adults who supervise other activities on the campus, will keep an eye out for any problems.

In the end, it was a collaborative effort. The Parent Club, the after-school program and the district put up the \$1,500 to purchase the material.

The boxes were built by various wood working classes and other student groups, Piluso said.

"It is all tied to state standards of for physical education," Piluso said. "I have been using it probably for four years in the county, and our occupational therapist also uses it, and we have both been pushing to get it into general education."

The Mill Street teachers will use the course as part of their physical education program, but officials have already found the students are eager to do the activities on their own during recess and other times.

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