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News

Utilizing fitness to stimulate focus

Saturday February 4, 2012 | By:Kori Sciandra











Rob Ray visited students during the grand opening of the fitness center at Charter School for Applied Technologies.

The daily task of a teacher - to encourage focus from students - can often become a daunting task if the child becomes bored with the curriculum. In the effort to increase focus and energy during the school day, Charter School for Applied Technologies in the Town of Tonawanda built a new fitness facility, fully equipped with new exercise equipment.

The school received a \$100,000 grant from a stimulus fund for charter schools and made up the remaining funds for the total project, which cost \$1.2 million from funding provided by the state per child. The school is eligible to receive two thirds of \$16,000 per child who attend the charter school that lives within the city limits and transfers from a Buffalo public school.

The idea to build the fitness center sparked after School Superintendent J. Efrain Martinez read the book "Spark," by John Ratey, M.D., which focuses on the interest of stimulating the brain and the muscles through exercise in order to increase focus during the school day.

The facility is open to students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Use of the new facility has changed the curriculum from a sports-based program, that required students exercise two days per week, or 120 minutes per week to a fitness-based program, that allows students to exercise five days per week, or 225 minutes per week.

The intent of the change is to have a positive long-term effect on the excitement students will have throughout the day while learning and participating in other school activities.

"I walk through the gym quite often. The kids are happy, and their energy levels are up," said Communication Director Justina Fetterly. "We want this to increase focus in the classroom."

The new facility, located in close proximity to the building that schools kindergarten through eighth grade students, is 8,700 square feet. The fitness center contains new locker rooms, offices, an area for aerobics classes, elipticals, treadmills, and exercise bikes.





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"The equipment is advanced. It's all hooked up to the Internet. The students can race the person on the equipment next to them if they want," said Fetterly.

Although there have been no official surveys conducted at this time to determine the effect on the students the facility has had, the school is hoping for a long-term increase in focus and energy.

There will also be discussion in the future to make adjustments for students in grades nine through 12 to be able to utilize the facility.

The high school is located about a quarter mile from the facility and safety and transportation have been taken into consideration at this time.



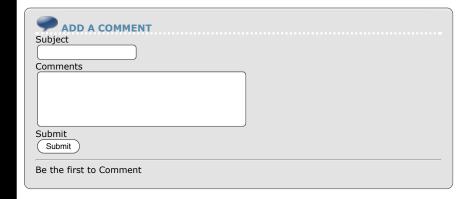


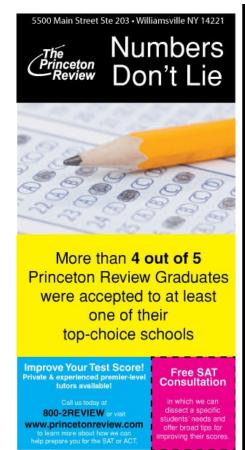


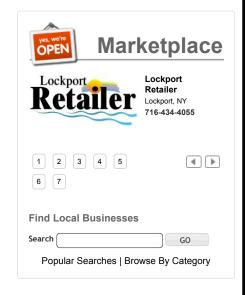


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