

High-Tech Training at Sierra Vista Junior High

Where technology is making physical fitness fun



Although video games and other forms of technology have been cited as major contributors to the decline in physical fitness among our nation's young people, at Sierra Vista Junior High School such technology is key to getting kids in shape. Seriously.

What is taught here is referred to as "The New Physical Education." It is characterized by using modern technology, including video games, to get kids moving, sweating and fit.

George Velarde, the physical education department chair at this remarkable school that is part of the William S. Hart School District in Canyon Country, California, considers the fitness center "the heart and soul of our program." The center is divided into three parts, one that contains cardio equipment, another that contains resistance training equipment, and a third that offers the latest in high-tech

video exercise equipment.

One unique aspect of the program is the use of sophisticated heart rate monitors. With these monitors and supportive software, teachers can determine how hard the kids are working every training session and how they are progressing. Further, teachers are able to use this information to quickly and effectively personalize each student's workout. In fact, the efficiency of the program is such that one instructor can safely supervise 50 kids at one time, and approximately 150 kids can train at this facility at the same time with no waiting. In effect, being able to effectively work with so many students at once can, in the long run, save a school money. So, how's it working?

In the seven years since the New PE Program was instituted at Sierra Vista, the school's fitness scores have improved every year in every category.

For example, in the 2003-2004 school year, 59.5 percent of the students could achieve the state standards in the 1-mile run, but last year 78.4 percent achieved this standard – an increase of 18.9 percent! Other standards show the following percentages of improvement: body composition, 1.5; abdominal strength, 9.2; trunk extension strength, 3.3; upper body strength, 14; and shoulder flexibility, 25.2. Wow! Further, the school has also seen an increase in its Academic Performance Index, which is a measure of how schools are performing as a whole. So, not only are the kids getting fitter, they are getting smarter.

Shown above are a few photos from the kids working out on the seemingly endless variety of exercise options available at Sierra Vista Junior High. In future issues of *BFS*, we plan to present much more information about this exciting, high-tech way to get kids fit. **BFS**

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