

Learning in a New Environment

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As I was exercising over the weekend, I reflected on the excellent PE sharing programs I saw this past Friday. Parents, grandparents, siblings, and special friends were all impressed by the athletic accomplishments of our first, second, and third graders. Mr. Underwood, Mr. Sullivan, and Miss Durbin developed a series of sharing programs that demonstrated a wide variety of physical skills and levels of cooperation. As I observed each grade level, it was obvious how the curriculum spirals to develop increasing strength, agility, stamina, and skill sets. Each child fully engages in the curriculum and enjoys the experience. Our PE sharing programs have always impressed me because they highlight the excellence of the program, wellness, and the importance of keeping our bodies strong, healthy, and coordinated. But something was different this year, and I recognized that our new learning environment played an important part in each sharing program.

Our new Primary School gym is a space that truly allows our students to move freely and stretch their skill development. In the past, we always had to keep the limited space of the multipurpose room in mind when designing the menu of physical activities for a class. That is no longer the case. Earlier this fall we had fifteen pairs of children passing footballs at the same time, and the pairs could really spread out so that those children who were proficient could stretch their skill level instead of having to pass only five to ten feet due to lack of space. This year's basketball drills, hula-hoop demonstrations, and parachute exercises were a joy to watch, and it was easier to see the children. I also know that the teachers are looking forward to the upcoming Snag Golf unit because all aspects of the curriculum will be implemented now that we have sufficient space.

The environment has other benefits as well. We have ample physical space for the many different types of activities for students in all three divisions; the building is rarely empty at this time of year. The separate office is now just an office and not combined with storage. Therefore, all of the teacher/coaches have an individual workspace in the PS, and our new storage room allows the teachers to better organize and manage the equipment. Both the natural and artificial lighting are perfect for the esthetic of the space and its usage during various times of day. The bathrooms are perfect for both young children and adults because we now have separate facilities. Finally, security is enhanced because the gym can be in use while the main building is locked and off limits. Using our multipurpose room meant that children had access to all of the Primary School when they had team practice at night or on the weekend.

We're celebrating what a difference this space has made!