

Motor Skills at Gold Rush Country School

Under direction of Mrs. June Yapp

Motor skills classes are part of the schedule for the elementary students at Gold Rush Country School. The 2nd- 8th grades all participate during 15 minute increments two days a week.

You probably wonder why “motor skills”, when your student has great coordination already. Well, you can have good coordination, and yet have a need for better balance in your body or better tracking ability effecting your reading or comprehension. This program is better understood as an effort to improve balance in our whole body culminating in development of better visual tracking ability. It focuses on exercises that use both sides of the body and brain at the same time. We use jumping, balancing and tracking exercises as well as left-right motion such as crawling and skipping. We also try to incorporate as many senses into an exercise as possible.

One exercise is called the “hanging ball”. Imagine a student standing, feet apart, facing a suspended ball at about chin level. A large chart with words or math or symbols is positioned about 6 feet away at eye level. The student holds a 4 foot pole by grasping both ends and lightly hitting the ball on a center marking. Each time the ball is struck, he says one of the words on the chart. He is therefore using his sense of hearing, touch and sight at the same time and enforcing the learning experience in several ways.

We have set up about 10 stations in our multi-purpose room for this morning class. Parents or interested parties are welcome to observe, as long as they are not disturbing our brief class time.

The connection between motor development and learning ability has been known for centuries, but the realization that lack of good visual tracking ability was a deterrent to reading wasn't recognized by many educators. I was fortunate to be part of an organization of medical people (ophthalmologists, optometrists, neurologists) and educators who noticed consistent problems and were able to see how certain exercises aided the development of better tracking ability. Many workshops and classes have contributed to the spread of the use of motor skills which have aided in not only improved reading skills, but over-all better self-esteem and confidence related to learning experiences.

So, you can see why we encourage the use of these classes each week, and we hope, in time, we can extend them to other aspects of our complete learning environment here at Gold Rush Country School.

“Miss June”