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Test case

Pilot program teaches basics of good health

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Students at Hook Elementary School practice a cadence related to nutrition Wednesday at the school.

Troy City Schools' elementary students are joining the fight to end childhood obesity with the help of some "wise guys."

Troy City Schools are the first in the state to pilot the program OrganWise Guys with the help of The Ohio State University.

Lisa Goodall, representative from The Ohio State University Miami County Extension Office, presented the program to each school building's K-5 students.

"This is teaching kids to look at the basics like reading food labels," said Goodall as she set-up the presentation at Hook Elementary on Wednesday.

"It's simple and easy for teachers to use. We'll keep data on how many times they are using the program," Goodall said.

"The kids can have movement in the class that goes along with each subject as they are learning," said Penny Johnson, Hook Elementary principal. "This involves all the new standards in physical and health education."

The pilot program has been part of health standards for seven states in the U.S., and Troy is the first in the state of Ohio to be part of the OrganWise Guys Comprehensive School Program.

"We're the only district that is doing this program in the state and it ties in really well with Senate Bill 210," said Eric Herman, Troy City Schools interim superintendent. "It's worked out well for us to be a part of this program - it's perfect timing."

Senate Bill 210, titled "Healthy Choices for Healthy Children Act," revised the standards for school nutrition, physical education and health classes for public schools. Part of the mandate is for schools to document each student's blood pressure and body mass index to submit to the state.

"The neat part of this program is the funding that helps us do all the BMI checks and blood pressure levels," Herman said. "It happened to fall into Senate Bill 210 and for us, it seems to fit with what we really need."

According to Herman, funding is available from The Ohio State University to provide the program in every elementary building, except Concord and Hook elementaries, and was based on the number of students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. The district paid for the program in Hook and Concord.

According to research studies that can be found at www.organwiseguys.com, the program is based on a four-year quasi-experimental study which showed statistically significant improvements in program children's weight and blood pressure measures, as well as significantly higher average standardized test scores, as compared to outcomes of children in non-program schools.

Evaluation data also show that parents increasingly are engaged with their children's nutrition and healthy food choices as a result of the nutrition education resources provided through the schools.

Newsletters about the program will be sent home monthly, Goodall said.

Goodall also will visit each elementary school once a month presenting a "Food of the Month" program to teach children about various food choices.

"I will be conducting a food tasting in their child's cafeteria monthly," Goodall said.

During Wednesday's presentation, children learned the names and "nicknames" of organs of the body and its basic functions.

Goodall taught the children the basics of regular exercise, the difference between high fat and low fat snacks, and the importance of drinking plenty of water.

Goodall was joined by Joyce McDowell, from The Ohio State University's family and nutrition program.

McDowell said the university chose Troy City Schools due to its diversity and economic environment. McDowell also said the district's administration was enthusiastic when the university approached the school about being the pilot school district for the program.

"This is like our test case," McDowell said. "This program has been very successful in other states and we want to see how it fits here in Ohio."

McDowell cited research that coincides with the overall health of a child and test scores that were achieved with the program.

For more information about the OrganWise Guys Comprehensive School Program, visit its website at www.organwiseguys.com/researchandreviews.html.