

Pilot course gives Log College Middle School students lifetime fitness knowledge

By Gary Weckselblatt Staff Writer | Posted: Tuesday, March 31, 2015 4:15 pm

Citing a need to promote lifelong, active and healthy lifestyles, the Centennial School District is piloting a course to teach youngsters ways to stay fit through adulthood.

“It’s a great idea for kids who want to pursue a career in fitness or just want to get fit and follow that into adult life,” said Cathy Perkins, principal at Log College Middle School where the program is being taken as an elective by 36 students in two classes.

Beginning in September, she said, the district plans to expand the pilot class to include Klinger Middle School.

“It’s an exciting class,” she said, “and we really felt there was a need for students to continue with fitness once they leave school. So this class gets them involved with things they can do on their own once they leave gym class.”

Matt Weisensale, a physical education teacher at Log College who helped design the course, said “In the past, in the old days, people used to do a lot more manual work, and they were more active in their lifestyle through their jobs. Nowadays, there’s a lot of computer work, and people sit at desks. They don’t get enough physical activity, so there’s a need for recreational activities.”

The class, taught by the school’s physical education teachers Michelle Pfeiffer, Jim Rodgers and Weisensale, involves a lot of jogging, bicycling, jumping rope and other aerobic activities to build up their endurance. The Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run, used by the U.S. Soccer team, is also incorporated, and students will have their body fat measured throughout the semester.

“We’ve seen a lot of improvement,” said Weisensale. “They’re very self-motivated.”

The class also includes resistance training to build muscle. Students are also taught about characteristics that make up wellness, such as nutrition and wellness.

“We’re hoping through this we can expose them to additional activities that aren’t covered in their regular phys ed curriculum,” Pfeiffer said.

For example, the school’s pool will be set up with a course students can snorkel through. Outside, they’ll set up their own fitness trails.

“They’ll design them in little groups,” Pfeiffer said. “They’re being exposed to activities that we don’t have time for in our regular phys ed class. We’re really excited it will have the carryover experience that we’re looking for.”

Dawson Pierson, an eighth-grader, said the class is “giving us skills to remember for our later years if

we are losing our shape.”

Cassie Curran, in seventh grade, said: “In this class you can actually be active and not go oh, I didn’t have the time for it.”

Perkins, the school’s principal, said the class is a way to battle the epidemic of childhood obesity. “This will give them some ideas into the future about how to continue with their own personal fitness goals.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, childhood obesity has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents in the past 30 years.

The percentage of obese children aged 6 to 11 increased in the U.S. from 7 percent in 1980 to nearly 18 percent in 2012. Similarly, the percentage of obese adolescents 12 to 19 increased from 5 percent to nearly 21 percent over the same period.

Children and adolescents who are obese are likely to remain obese, according to the CDC, and are more at risk for adult health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, several types of cancer, and osteoarthritis.

Healthy lifestyle habits, including healthy eating and physical activity, can lower the risk of becoming obese and developing related diseases, the CDC states.

“We call it lifetime wellness because we want these kids to develop these skills for a lifetime,” Weisensale said. “We want them to be able to do these things outside of gym class. ... We’re doing a lot of different interesting activities they can do through their lifetime.”