



Hannah Piecuch • Daily Times

Lori Pare's first grade class at Hopkins Hill Elementary School does one of two dance workouts put in place for Wellness Week 2010. Students and teachers participated in a variety of events promoting exercise and nutrition and some of the events have even been popular enough that there have been requests to continue the activities after Wellness Week is over.

Well, well, well ... it feels good!

HANNAH PIECUCH
hpiecuch@ricentral.com

COVENTRY — Lunging, jumping and waving their hands, students at Hopkins Hill Elementary School know what to do when the music starts.

Every day this week the students have had two exercise breaks, each three-minutes long, to get up and move before getting back to work, says Nurse-Teacher Diane Kowal.

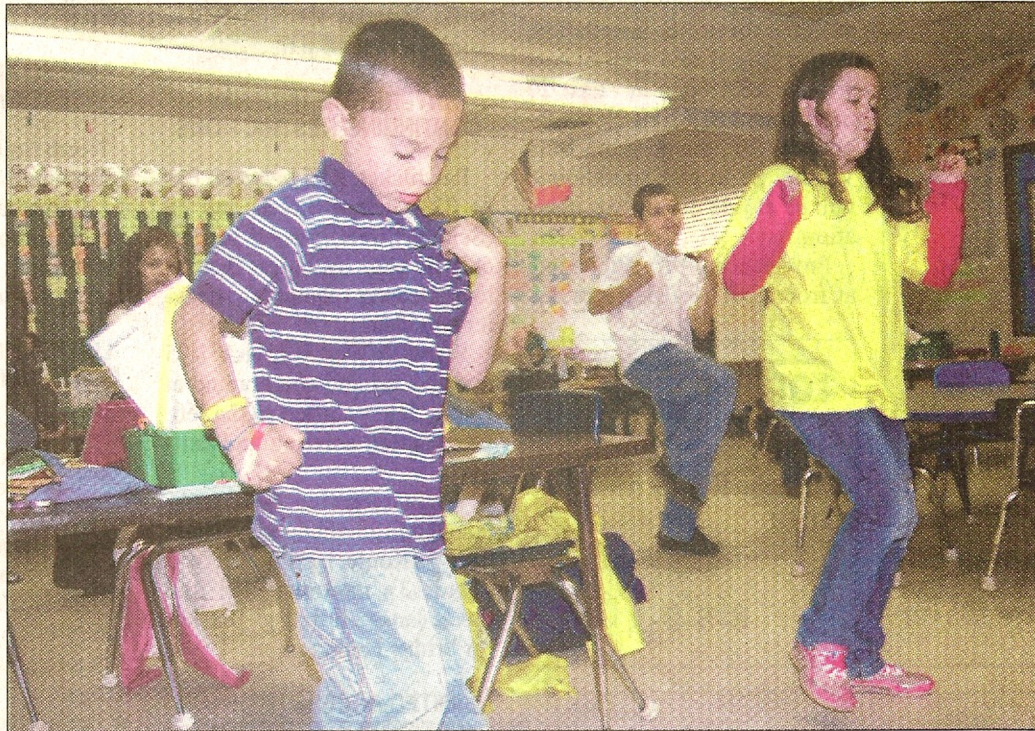
"They love it," she says. "Both the kids and the teachers have asked if we can keep doing the exercises after wellness week." She doesn't see any reason that they can't.

Wellness week is held every year in Coventry, says School Committeewoman Lisa Tomasso, but this year it is more coherent than ever. Each school has come up with their own plan to celebrate wellness and teach their students about healthy living and Aramark, the contracted lunch provider, is helping as well.

Elementary school students have been introduced to new fresh fruits and vegetables every day of the week: broccoli on Monday, carrots on Tuesday, pineapple on Wednesday, strawberries on Thursday and multicolor cauliflower on Friday. Middle and High School students are getting a chance to experience some more gourmet options at lunch: fresh mangos on Monday, lentil soup on Tuesday, quinoa pilaf on Wednesday, tomatillo salsa on Thursday and goat cheese on Friday.

The exercise breaks aren't the only thing Hopkins Hill is doing to teach the students about wellness, Kowal said. They are doing a walk-athon during physical education and they're en-

Using a DERM scan machine, high school students are able to see where their skin has been damaged by sun.



Hannah Piecuch • Daily Times

First grade students at Hopkins Hill Elementary get in one of their scheduled exercise breaks.

couraged to wear the same color as the fruit or vegetable of the day.

Just across town, students at Tiogue kicked off the week with an organized neighborhood walk, says Nurse-Teacher Shirley Hall. On Friday, they heard from Kids First about healthful eating and got to sample fruits and vegetables. They also took the dance and exercise breaks throughout the day.

Blackrock students are hearing a wellness word of the day, going on a school-wide walk, eating healthy snacks provided by the PTA, taking stretch breaks and dancing in the hallways, and holding a school-wide group dance on Friday.

It's a packed week of wellness for Washington Oak Students, as teachers encourage them to turn off the TV and play outside after school, organize an after-school walk, teach about healthy snacks, introduce them to some yoga stretches and tell jokes to promote laughter and good mental health. All week long Western Coventry students are doing puzzles and playing games that relate to healthy living.

The middle and high schools are trying to tackle more complicated issues of wellness, like addressing skin cancer and screening kids for scoliosis.

Wellness policy provides healthier food

Continued from Page A-1

Using a DERM scan machine, high school students are able to see where their skin has been damaged by sun, says Nurse-Teacher Roberta Millette,

“They’re still young enough that you can’t see [the damage] on their face. We have a lot of kids who like to go sun tanning so the response varies pretty tremendously. Most are concerned. Some are a little scared and it varies, it depends on the student and how seriously they’re going to take it. We’re encouraging the use of sunscreen and giving out little samples.”

Other topics covered this week will be Lyme Disease, smoking, alcohol abuse, eating disorders, depression and sexually transmitted diseases.

Drawing from the “Eat this, not that” books, middle school students are getting daily tips for healthy eating, says Nurse-Teacher Kathleen Larson “One day I did food from Burger King and I asked them which meal they thought was more healthy, let them think about it for a minute, and

then told them which one was better. Even some of the teachers have been surprised.”

The students are also doing fitness grams that measure their height, weight and agility.

As a member of the wellness committee, Tomasso is very pleased with what she sees going on in the district this week, she said.

“Working with Aramark this year has been wonderful. They’ve been really supportive of the updated health and wellness policy and are providing kids with better selections that are healthier and still tasty. They’ve really gone above and beyond.”

This year, the committee redefined the district’s wellness policy. “We spent all this time talking about the food — no cupcakes and cakes — and this wellness week was an opportunity to get to the other side, to celebrate healthfully and get people up and moving around.”

The wellness committee itself is very diverse, she added. “Not only because it represents someone from every building but because we have many of the nurses and

physical education teachers and we’ve been working from the very beginning with Kids First.”

The new policy is different than the old one because of the clarity of its goals, Tomasso said. “First, this policy aims to create an environment where healthy lifestyles are modeled and encouraged throughout the year by administrators, staff and PTAs. Second is how the policy will achieve that goal. The previous policy contained strong language restricting what could and could be eaten in schools. The tone of the revised policy has changed from a demand for compliance to a model for cooperation amongst all who are involved in educating and raising children in Coventry. This policy focuses on providing the tools and opportunities necessary for students to learn how to make informed choices today and well into what we hope will be a long, healthy future for all of them.”

In her opinion, the new policy is much more in line with the mission of Coventry Public Schools because “it focuses on modeling, collaboration and decision-making.”