

Odessa R-7 joins fight against obesity



Upper elementary school... students in Odessa can now benefit from the recent installation of a NEOS electronic game/exercise unit, which combines exercise activities with fun.

Odessa Upper Elementary School and Live Healthy Live Well are taking steps to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic.

Odessa R-7 School District, in collaboration with Live Healthy Live Well, is working to make progress in the fight

against obesity by providing an environment for students that encourages active and healthy lifestyles.

A NEOS system has been installed on the playground at Odessa Upper Elementary School in an effort to increase physical activity.

The NEOS system has a 360-degree circle design that combines electronic games with exercise. It offers eight different electronic games for students to choose. Each game delivers a workout that includes running, jumping and lateral movements that raise heart rates by 20%. NEOS is designed to improve agility, coordination, strength and stamina skills by disguising exercise as fun.

Kristi Bieri, physical education teacher at Odessa Upper Elementary, has included the NEOS system in the curriculum.

"We hope to see an increase in the students' interest in physical activity and athletic ability by using the NEOS," Bieri said. "The more they practice, the better they will get with different activities."

Playground rules and regulations are established for safe participation. Children are required to wear closed-toed shoes in order to use the NEOS. Up to two students can play at a time while the others wait behind a yellow line outside of the NEOS.

Installing the NEOS system is one of the steps Odessa R-7 School District has taken in the fight against obesity.

Nutrition education also has been implemented into curriculum and an outdoor garden at McQuerry Elementary is used by students to grow healthy foods.

Odessa is also one of the six Lafayette County schools to participate in Active and Healthy Schools, a program that takes aim at unhealthy lifestyles by making changes in school environments with help from University of Missouri Extension and the Health Care Coalition of Lafayette County.

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