



AZUSA

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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No-Cost Before-School Physical Activity Program Stimulates Learning and Promotes Healthy Choices

Early mornings at three Azusa Unified Elementary schools finds dozens of students getting ready for a productive school day by participating in Build Our Kids Success (BOKS), a before-school physical activity program designed to stimulate children and prepare them for a day of learning. At no cost to participating families, BOKS combines team games and group activities, making exercise fun for kids, while promoting healthy nutrition and eating habits.

Three AUSD elementary schools – Gladstone Street, Valleydale and Powell – offer the program, available for students in second- through fifth-grade, through a community partnership with Azusa Pacific University’s Community Advancement Program, which finances BOKS and provides the equipment and instructors.

“We recognize the importance of providing more physical activity and healthier choices for our children. BOKS has proven very successful and popular with both students and their parents,” AUSD Superintendent Dr. Linda Kaminski said. “With the gracious support of Azusa Pacific University, our goal is to make BOKS available at all of our elementary schools.”

On a recent Thursday morning at Gladstone Street Elementary, two certified BOKS instructors – physical education majors from APU – warmed up 40 students with calisthenics before leading them in a boisterous variation of the playground game “Freeze Tag.” The instructors ended the 40-minute period with a short talk about nutrition, called a BOKS “bit.”

“Before-school physical activity increases oxygen and blood flow to the brain, which activates children’s ability to focus, be more energetic and encourages positive behavior,” said Diana Rudolph, assistant professor of Applied Exercise Science and Physical Education at APU. “BOKS makes the kids more active and aware, they concentrate harder in class and want to pursue more physical activity afterwards, including organized sports.”

Though there is no cost to participate, there is a 40-student limit at each school. Students taking part in the first week of BOKS at Gladstone Street Elementary gleefully hopped, skipped and jumped their way through a game called “Compass,” and finished the period refreshed and ready for class.

“This is the first time I have done BOKS. It’s pretty good, I like it a lot,” Gladstone Street fifth-grader Nickolas Manriquez said. “I would recommend it to my friends, if they like being active.”

In the spring, Gladstone Street will implement a pilot program in which a 30-minute BOKS program will be introduced in the first period of the instructional day, and will count toward the state of California’s elementary school requirement of 200 hours of physical education every 10 school days. If the pilot program is successful, BOKS could become a permanent part of the Gladstone Street curriculum, as well as other District schools.

“Through this program, students learn the value of daily exercise and eating healthy, they are totally engaged and excited,” AUSD Board of Education President Yolanda Rodriguez-Pena said. “This partnership is allowing us to really expand the opportunities for our kids and improve their engagement in school.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS

PHOTO1: Gladstone Street students lock arms and race to the north during a game of “Compass” during a before-school BOKS work out.

PHOTO2: Coach Kiana Guzman from Azusa Pacific University leads Gladstone Street Elementary students in a round of stretching before a BOKS work out.

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