

Central School Jumps!

by Jenny Moskowitz

(May 15, 2008) "Strawberry short cake cream on top tell me the name of your sweetheart, a, b, c" -- does that sound reminiscent of your childhood days and jumping rope? Well, Central School has brought back the jump rope and given its kids reason to jump and keep jumping throughout the month of May.



Central teacher Joan George and a group of students keep their jump ropes turning.

To help get Central jumping, physical education teacher Joan George, school nurse Vicky Ruggiero along with two parents, Kim Larsen and Karen Spiridellis, applied for a grant with the Rye YMCA through the Activate America Program. This is a nationwide public health initiative attempting to counter the epidemics of obesity and chronic disease brought on by physical inactivity. The grant along with PTA funds paid for a 3-day visit from jump rope experts Punk Rope, jump rope books for the library, plus a jump rope for each student and faculty member.

The program taught students and staff how to integrate regular periods of moderate to vigorous physical activity into their schedules, roughly 3-5 times per week. The goal was to enhance health, academic performance, attitudes and classroom behavior of children at school. Punk Rope focused on teaching the students to jump rope while promoting fitness and athleticism in combination with rhythm and music. They shared their philosophy that everyone is an "athlete."

It did not take long for Central administration, faculty and students to get into jumping. Central School has a diverse student body, and children – or adults - of any athletic ability, cultural background or socio-economic level can enjoy jumping rope.

Children, staff and parents were encouraged to practice jumping each day. The students were asked to keep track of the number of jumps by filling out a slip which was then placed in a tally box outside the school office. On May 7th the entire school jumped together outside as part of ACES ... All Central Exercises. The student Council has planned to add up the total number of jumps completed as a school by the end of May.

"It is so exciting how kids and adults incorporated the whole idea," said Kim Larsen, one of the parents supporting the program. "I saw a couple of the 5th grade teachers showing the kids a bit of double dutch."

A fourth grade student explained, "At the beginning I could only jump backwards but yesterday I jumped 201 times going forward around my neighborhood, it was so much fun and a great workout."

Jenny Moskowitz volunteers with the Central PTA.