

Welcome Back! Fern Hill

Reminds me of a TV show.....(only if you're old enough to remember!) Looks like we are ready to go! Doesn't matter...we're starting anyway! At the end of last year our parents completed the district's end-of-year survey and we discovered a common theme when reviewing your comments. RECESS CONCERNS. Parents mentioned wanting more coverage on recess and also wanting more games where every child can participate. We, as a building, are answering!

Recess started out as a break for teachers who were in one room the entire day. This is when they took care of bodily functions (yes, teachers go to the bathroom) and got some grading done, etc. There was no need for adult supervision as the older children assumed the leadership role.

More recently recess has become more difficult for the children; many have the same interests as we (parents and teachers) have organized their mindset and choices. As we took a look at recess at Fern Hill we saw 20 versus 20 soccer games, 20 versus 20 kickball games, other children playing jump rope and still others on the playground equipment. However, as children get older they tend to gravitate to the sport area. When children play these large games, most do not get to touch the ball or if they do it is quickly taken from them (no matter what their skill level). This leads to frustration and ultimately anger for many of our children, which can turn into disciplinary issues. Obviously we must deal with any mis-behaviors as we do not tolerate those at Fern Hill. This can cut into instructional time, which takes away from the child's education.

In Physical Education class we rarely go above 6 versus 6 in any grade at any time. In fact I keep K-2 for the most part individual with a partner or at most 2 versus 2. Philosophically, this allows way more touches and many more chances. This also improves fitness as now everyone has a major part to play in the outcome. (not so in 20 vs 20).

On Thursday September 6, 2012 we will again have Curt Hinson out to help us with small sided games. Curt (former national elementary teacher of the year) will be at Fern Hill all day and I will have a substitute so that we can teach and monitor the children both in an assembly and at recess. Children will have many more choices and many more opportunities as mentioned above. Many may think why hasn't this been implemented before? One guess?? MONEY.....Thanks to Mrs. Eberly, the PTO and a grant we have the necessary equipment and are ready to move forward. The recess equipment will be stored separate from Physical Education equipment and will be closely monitored so that we don't lose any.

The children will still be allowed to swing, jump rope, and play many of the games they have previously enjoyed; however, we are simply restructuring the amount of children participating or making slight variations to the "rules" of the game to allow for more active participation from all participants. Yes, if you are a professional you can think of some issues with any system; however, I believe that this is a better set up for the children's success and development. We look forward to working together to

implement this inclusive practice during recess to allow for a “trouble-free” recess experience for all students. Please contact me by e-mail (and if you wish to dialogue in person that would be fine also) if you have any questions!

Best wishes for a fantastic school year,

Mike Usilton P.E. teacher