

Primary entry #48: Jesmond Public School



THE

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VALUED: Joy Harrison helps Helena Mengistu and Lily Bringi with their reading. Picture: Leilani Lawrence

Programs to help learn skills are fun

By **LEILANI LAWRENCE** and **ALEXANDRA ADNUM**

YOUNG people in the Jesmond area are getting excited about church thanks to some fun and exciting initiatives.

Jesmond Uniting Church has two youth-oriented programs that have students talking: the KOTUC (Kids of The Uniting Church) Youth Group and HELP (Homework and English Literacy Program).

HELP co-ordinator Cherice Anquetil said the program used volunteers from the community to support newly-arrived students in completing their homework and other English language tasks. The program started in 2005 and has grown to include high school students.

"The children form a great relationship with their tutors, and they are able to bring along anything they need help with," Ms Anquetil said.

The program recently received a government grant of more than \$16,000 through the Community Relations Commission for a Multi-cultural NSW. The money will be used for new notebook computers, tablets and reading resources.

The KOTUC Youth Group is a new initiative for students from years 3 to 7, established this year by congregation members Fiona and Niall Mackay.

Children participate in organised activities run by volunteers, including craft classes, cooking and scavenger hunts.

Pupils moving for maths

By **MEGAN HAMPSON**

PRIMARY school students are improving their mathematical knowledge by kicking, jumping and running in a unique program designed to stimulate young minds.

The Thinking While Moving program is an initiative of the University of Newcastle and the Department of Education to incorporate physical activity into traditionally static maths lessons.

Jesmond Public School was one of eight local schools to take part in the recent trial. Stage three students took part in lessons where mathematical activities are integrated into physical movements, with children meeting their academic outcomes in a unique way.

University of Newcastle lecturer and program co-ordinator Nick Riley said the program was born from an identified need for primary students to achieve more physical activity during school hours.

He said research showed that in children up to the age of 11, combining physical activity with academic concepts stimulates neurological connections within the brain, thereby enhancing both learning and health outcomes.

Introducing the physical component into maths lessons was an obvious choice, he said.

"There was a huge drop-off in interest in maths when children get



JUMP TO IT: Jesmond students Yaeseo Shin, Kaila Stead, Brianna Holloway, Juntae Jong, Tahlia Sams-James and Annan Sarder practise their number skills. Picture: Megan Hampson

to high school," Mr Riley said. "A lot of children find it boring and repetitive. Children were disengaged in maths."

The response to the program has been positive.

"One child said it was like learning by what's in your head, not what's written down on paper, like on a worksheet," Mr Riley said.

Data collected by the university supports this, with about 20 per cent more on-task behaviour in

lessons incorporating movement.

Mr Riley said the principles behind the program could be used in all lessons in all stages in primary school. Something as simple as having children stand up from their chairs to speak during lessons will have health benefits.

"Just reducing the sitting time will speed up your metabolic rate," Mr Riley said.

Year 5 student Tahlia Sams-James loves the "fun maths".

"Maths in the classroom is, 'errr'," she said.

"When you go outside it's completely different. You get fit and active and experience different things."

The Department of Education in conjunction with the Priority Research Centre in Physical Activity and Nutrition at the University of Newcastle is developing a DVD to roll out the program to other NSW schools.



FULL TUMS: Joseph Mblechi, Rory Walters and Obedi Karungurungu. Picture: Hayden Seaton

Breakfast club to kick-start kids

By **HAYDEN SEATON** and **MICHAEL HODGINS**

IF breakfast is the most important meal of the day, then children at Jesmond Public School are off to a great start.

The school has established a new Breakfast Club, designed to ensure all children have the chance to begin their day with a filling and healthy meal.

The club operates three mornings a week before school, serving students who would otherwise go without anything to eat until morning tea time.

Breakfast Club co-ordinator Rachean Boyce said the initiative had received support through donations from businesses such as Jesmond Woolworths, Georgetown Fruit Barn, community members,

teaching staff and Baptist community services.

"These children now have access to a healthy breakfast. Teachers have noticed the children who take part in the club have generally been more settled during class and better able to focus on learning," Mrs Boyce said.

"We hope ... to get strong support from the community so we can maintain and grow this initiative."

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