

Plug-in Failure



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Exergaming: Conlee elementary students, staff get active with Wii

By Mike Cook For the Sun-News
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LAS CRUCES - USA Today will publish a story in its Oct. 11 edition about Conlee Elementary School's use of Wii exergaming programs and the school's closed-circuit television system to help make students and staff more active.

USA Today nutrition and fitness reporter Nanci Hellmich interviewed Conlee Elementary physical education teacher Celsa Madrid by phone last week. A photographer is expected to visit the school this week to take photos of students and staff to be used with the story.

Madrid and other Conlee Elementary staff conduct a "Just Dance" morning exercise program that is a segment on Conlee Colt TV's broadcast every Wednesday, said Madrid.

Madrid said the fitness segment came about during the summer of 2009 when she took a New Mexico State University summer class that involved exergaming.

"It caught my attention because I couldn't for the life of me figure out how video games could truly incorporate exercise, or at least 'meaningful' exercise," said Madrid.

The NMSU class, "Adult Think Tank Opportunities," was designed to help participants learn how to "engage in the same activities we use with youth, and work with other professionals to analyze how games could be used in classrooms, after-school programs, or other health-related activities," according to the class description.

As a result of taking the class, Madrid met Barbara Chamberlin, PhD, director of the NMSU Games Learning Lab, who let USA Today know about Madrid's use of exergames in

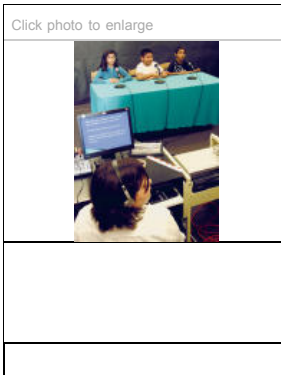
her classroom.

Chamberlin contacted Madrid about a project NMSU was involved with and offered Conlee Elementary "the opportunity to introduce and experiment with exergaming in our PE classes," said Madrid. "We have an exergaming class every Wednesday morning where our students work out with not only a Wii, but a Playstation, a Xavix and soon an Xbox 360 connect. Last year, NMSU produced a video on what we do," she said.

Madrid said a number of people at Conlee Elementary were "very supportive" of the new televised exercise initiative, and added that "it couldn't have happened without them." These included P.E. assistant Michelle Weir, who helped set up the program and assists with setting up and teaching the Wednesday exercise segment for Colt TV; teacher Diane Long, who first suggested the idea of using exergaming in an exercise program; social worker Nora Breen and the Good Samaritan Village of Las Cruces - Breen contacted

Good Sam and asked for their financial support for the program, which the school's long-time partner was happy to provide, purchasing the game used for the televised exercise program; and Principal Jennifer Terrazas.

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