

***Childress students applaud Mind Institute
Popular program helps teach math through music***

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Childress Elementary student Gerson Aguilar is learning to play the piano through math using an innovative program to sharpen skills in both areas.

Childress Elementary School fifth-grader Gerson Aguilar admits he had a hard time concentrating on some of the more difficult subjects at school, but lately his concentration has sharpened, through an innovative program that incorporates music into learning.

"I concentrate better in social studies, science and math," said Gerson, 11. "I don't take a long time to do the problems anymore."

The school is the first in the Canutillo Independent School District to join the Mind Institute's music and math program, which teaches children math skills while also teaching them about the basic components of music. Students also use a computer program featuring a cartoon penguin, JiJi, that guides students through various math-related concepts without any spoken words.



The students at Childress Elementary are using a creative program to sharpen their math skills through music. The pilot program uses math to teach students how to play the piano.

(Photos by Vanessa Monsisvais / El Paso)

"They watch JiJi lead them through graphs, grids, equations and problem-solving, without specific directions," said Kathie Holguin, a first-grade teacher at Childress Elementary, at 7700 Cap Carter in Vinton. "They enjoy it and it definitely reinforces their thinking."

Music teacher Daniel Martinez said the program uses math and music by teaching students about math-related patterns in music.

"It's designed to join the two to create an overall program that's unified," Martinez said. "They're learning a lot without realizing that they're learning it."

Martinez said the program, which began at Childress Elementary in January, has become a hit among students. Martinez often has about 25 students who practice in his classroom before and after school and during lunchtime.

"You don't need to motivate them to get them to do the work," Martinez said.

Fifth-grade teacher Patricia Piñon said the students in her classroom were also her students when she taught third grade at the school, and has noticed an overall improvements in her students' academic achievements.

"Their grades have gone up. I've seen a big difference," Piñon said. "The music and math correlates with what they see in the classroom and apply in the music that they play. When I introduce a new (math concept), they say, 'It's just like we learned in music class.' They've already observed it and they've already had a hands-on experience."

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Math tips

- Make math fun. Spend time with your children on simple board games, puzzles and activities that encourage better attitudes and stronger math skills.
 - The kitchen is filled with tasty opportunities to teach fractional measurements, like doubling and dividing cookie recipes.
 - Use real world examples to teach math. Point out ways that people use math every day to pay bills, balance their checkbooks, figure out their net earnings, make change and tip at restaurants.
 - Prepare them for a profession. Let children know what vocations require a sound base in mathematics. Careers in carpentry, landscaping, medicine, pharmacy, aeronautics and meteorology all require strong math skills.
 - Tune into technology. Encourage your child to use computers and the Internet at home, your local library, and after-school programs for tasks like developing charts, graphs, maps and spreadsheets.
 - Encourage children to solve problems. Provide assistance, but let them figure it out themselves.
- Source: www.learningfirst.org

For more information
www.mindresearch.net