

# The Truth - Local News

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## Playing with purpose

### Roosevelt students learn lessons with videogames

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ELKHART -- Students at Roosevelt Elementary School, 215 E. Indiana Ave., in the extended-day program keep learning even after school hours.

In fact, they get pretty hyped up about it when the end of the day nears.

It's no surprise, though -- they play PlayStation video games in the unique after-school program.

The school is a pilot for an extended-day tutoring program called PLATO Achieve Now, where part of the tutoring is to play educational video games on portable consoles, split with classroom instructional time.

The school had to offer state-approved tutoring services as a result of failing Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act three years in a row.

PLATO Learning Inc., a company contracted by the school corporation, developed the enrichment program that is delivered interactively when the students play PLATO Adventures CDs, which feature cartoon-like characters and stories aligned with state education standards.

The games grab students' attention on such topics as reading, language arts and mathematics, with lessons based on each individual child's needs. Teachers give a pre-test and post-test to find weaknesses and help generate a learning path.

"I have definitely seen our K through 4 students really express great interest in it to the point of excitement," said coordinator Terry Jackson.

On Thursday, a classroom at Roosevelt echoed with bleeps and bleeps, music and voices. The students have volume controls on their consoles, so they all turn them up, causing the sounds to mingle together.

First-grader Jakia Matthews smiled as she started her disc, called "The Secret of Googol." It uses a dinosaur-like character to help her learn geometry and symmetrical patterns.

Many students come into the program already familiar with video games, but they can't use the toggle controls as they might at home. Teacher Charissa Barnes explained that it's more manual when they can only use the arrows or shape buttons.

She stands by to hand out snacks and help those students who get stuck or have technical problems.

Letters were sent home to parents when the school decided to start the program last spring. Students are chosen through parent and teacher recommendations and test scores.

The school got a small response at the time, but now that word of mouth has spread, parents call and ask how to get their children involved.

There now are 48 students in the program who stay after school twice a week for an hour and a half. Jackson hopes the program will be incorporated in other schools.

"Fifty percent of the time is teacher interaction -- it's not just games," Jackson pointed out. The games reinforce what the students learn during instructional time.

In another classroom, fourth-grade teacher Stephanie Kimmerly uses an overhead projector and construction paper fraction pies to teach math. These students will take over the video game consoles after their instructional time.

Fourth-grader Mariah James listens quietly. She says she's learned a lot about fractions and multiplication with the program.

"It's different because there is less kids and it's more funner ... I think it's the funnest because you get to play a game and learn at the same time," said Mariah.

Jackson said attendance to the program is not a problem.

"The younger kids gravitate to it," he said. "It's just a great tool ... they show up because they love it."

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