

EDUCATION

Northridge 'Avid4' outdoors

By **Corey Dahl**
Staff Writer

Northridge Elementary ditched the traditional 3 "R's" last week in favor of some new ones — rock climbing, rowing and riding.

The school hosted Avid4 Adventure's Outdoor Education Intensive all week, an on-campus program that teaches various outdoor activities and "Leave No Trace" principles to kids.

Each grade spent a day outside rotating through rock climbing, canoeing and mountain biking classes while learning about respect for the environment. After school, parents and siblings were invited to stop by and participate as well.

In its second year at the school, Principal Elizabeth Morris said the program is a hit with students, parents and staff.

"We love the idea of kids getting these kinds of experiences," she said. "It's an outdoor experience without leaving the school grounds, so you don't have the problems associated with going on a trip and you can include every student."

The program started three years ago as a joint effort by the Boulder Valley School District and Avid4 Adventure, a company that runs youth outdoor programs to get kids moving.

"We were looking at ways to deal with 'Sedentary Kid Syndrome,'" said David Secunda, Avid4 Adventure's program director. "With kids playing video games and watching television all the time, they just weren't getting outside as much."

Secunda and his team developed the outdoor education program and, after a year in Boulder, helped spread it to districts from Fort Collins to Highlands Ranch. This year, roughly 6,000 kids in 20 schools participated.

"We think it's been pretty successful," Secunda said. "Schools have asked us to come back again, and we've heard about students who, after going through the program, have signed up for some of the activities they tried out."

Northridge third-grader Christina Yoo gives the program a thumbs-up. The 9-year-old said the program not only taught her new skills and teamwork but was way more exciting than regular class.



PHOTO BY BRIAN SHAKLEY

Becky McNearny, 9, Justin Jones, 8, and Jordan Overman, 9, get a little shove from instructor Kyle Wittman while learning to canoe in a makeshift pool during an Avid4 Adventure camp at Northridge Elementary School June 14. Students also had the opportunity to learn how to mountain bike as well as participating in other outdoor activities during the weeklong camp.



PHOTO BY BRIAN SHAKLEY

Brandon Cattich, 9, left, and David Derrick, 9, navigate their way up the climbing wall during an Avid4 Adventure camp at Northridge Elementary School June 14.

"We usually only get to run around and do stuff at recess when we're in school," she said. "Here, we get to have a lot more fun."

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