

Milan school teachers take leap into 'Quantum Learning'

BY STANLEY DUNLAP

Inside Milan Middle School this week, the classic funk song "Jungle Boogie" blared through speakers as educators grooved along.

As Kool & the Gang advised the educators to "get down," their dance steps prompted students on the steps in long division in mathematics.

Incorporating music into a math lesson is one of the techniques of Quantum Learning, a program aimed at getting students more engaged in the classroom.

This week teachers, staff and administrators from Milan's elementary, middle and high schools trained with the program, which uses music, color and movement to help improve a student's retention.

Teacher Ellie Terrell trained Milan elementary school staff on the program she went through 5 years ago. At Nashville's Buena Vista Elementary School, she saw a range of improvements from attendance to student's attitudes about learning.

"I know my multiplication and division answers. I just don't know what to do next," Terrell said, recalling the dilemma of one of her students.

She said the same student used the visual symbols from a Quantum Learning song and probably thought, "I remember that goofy woman dancing. Oh yeah, here's the next step."

The strategies are based on studies of how children's brains are wired to learn and can be incorporated into lesson plans.

"Test scores for me went through the roof; we went up to 100 percent in proficiency in reading, and that was up from (around) 70 percent," Terrell said Wednesday.

Vocabulary words being woven into stories are creative ways being suggested to grab student's attention, said Milan supervisor of staff development Sam Rhodes.

School officials decided to offer the program to everyone after seeing its effect among some district teachers that had completed it in the past, Rhodes said.

"A teacher can put together a powerful and informed lesson, but if students aren't engaged, they're not going to learn," Rhodes said. "There's a great deal of research that tells you if we invoke their emotions, they're more likely to retain (information).

"With (K-8) we can do a lot more fluffier kind of stuff and reach them, but with high school we know even though we say they're children in bigger bodies (that) they need a more mature approach," Rhodes said.



Milan elementary school educators take notes about the Quantum Learning Program Wednesday during a training session. (Photos by KATIE MORGAN / The Jackson Sun)

Each morning last school year, a song greeted students in second-grade teacher Michelle York's class.

The Milan teacher, who completed training last summer, said she along with her students became energized with the song.

The morning boogie session captures their attention but also cues when its time to learn by closing with a clap.

"It gives their brain a moment to get out the wiggles and wake up before work begins," York said. "Some techniques may not work in my classroom, but with common planning time this year we can share ideas with each other."



Cami Eiskamp raps a song about the quadratic equation during a training session for Milan educators with the Quantum Learning Program on Wednesday at Milan Middle School.