

# CLIMBING WALL

## Steeple Run Elementary School Naperville, Illinois

The idea of adding a climbing wall to the gymnasium of Steeple Run Elementary School came from parents at a Steeple Run Home & School Association meeting in the Spring of 1998. A student had tried a climbing wall at another elementary school as part of a park district activity, and parents thought it would be fun to have a similar wall at Steeple Run. The response to the proposal by parents, staff, and students was overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic.

The new idea became a reality thanks to the financial assistance of the Steeple Run Home & School Association, District Parent Involvement Funds, and a Naperville Education Foundation Grant. Over the years, the Steeple Run Home & School Association had used the proceeds from their fund raisers to purchase computers, playground equipment, and instructional materials for the school. With the proposal of the climbing wall, they decided it was time to support the physical education department and its “wish list.” The Home & School Association dedicated the proceeds from their 1998-99 fund raisers—a gift wrap sale, the Market Day program, and a retailer gift certificate program—to the climbing wall. The funds needed for the climbing wall totaled \$15,000.

Expertise and a construction crew were retained from Indoor Summits, a Naperville sports establishment. Professional carpenters framed an entire wall of the gymnasium and made a wall of heavy plywood. Steeple Run custodians helped raise the wall and applied coats of primer paint. The finishing touches were added by a high school art teacher who painted the surface to look like a wall of stone boulders. Indoor Summits rigged the wall with the appropriate mountings for hand and foot-holds.

The fun really began with the training of parent volunteers and the unveiling of the climbing wall at the January Open House when the use of the wall was first demonstrated to parents and students. For the next two weeks, volunteer parents assisted the physical education teacher during physical education classes as students worked their way to the top of the wall.

The climbing wall has proven to be a good way to improve upper body strength, balance, and dexterity. Cooperation, teamwork, and problem solving skills are developed as well. The physical education department is adjusting their learning objectives so that students will use the climbing wall 3 times per school year, in 2-week curriculum units.

Steeple Run staff recently took a break on Institute Day and used the climbing wall for a team building activity. Plans are being made with the Lisle Park District to further expand community use of this new activity. Best of all, the climbing wall represents a truly cooperative effort by our entire school community on behalf of the students at Steeple Run School.

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