Teeing Up Success at Smith Elementary

March 13, 2019 - Livermore, CA - Everyone takes their shots fairly quickly, gently swinging plastic practice golf clubs on the Smith Elementary blacktop. The students have three soft tennis balls to putt toward a Velcro target standing in for a hole. They are nearly all finished in a matter of seconds, but one student has a single ball left, taking her time. She adjusts her stance, carefully lines up her shot, and makes a deliberate stroke for a perfect bullseye. With patience and perseverance, she applied what she learned from her first two attempts and set herself up for success.

Smith Elementary students have been participating in The First Tee of the Tri-Valley’s school program, which introduces golf lessons to elementary students. This program, in its first year at Smith, serves to enhance student health with a standards-based curriculum that emphasizes First Tee’s Nine Core Values: honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, respect, confidence, responsibility, perseverance, courtesy, and judgment.

“The structure of these lessons allows for healthy mental and physical activity, and ties in values students can bring with them back to the classroom,” said Smith Principal Joe Meunier. “A major piece of the game is about respect and integrity. It develops healthy habits, and affects how students carry themselves as positive, supportive classmates.”

First Tee provides the equipment and professional development to the teachers who facilitate the lesson time for their classes. The activity-based philosophy of the program gives teachers an opportunity to incorporate social-emotional, empowering values into the experience of learning a new sport. “Life is full of learning opportunities,” said teacher William Murphy, as students practiced their putting skills. “Look around at what your neighbors are doing that you could also do, or that you would do differently. This is an opportunity to practice acting your best.”

The First Tee program clearly promotes healthy physical choices and activities, but its attention to healthy habits in developing character make it stand out at Smith as an opportunity to educate the whole student. The development of social and emotional behavior as an aspect of overall health ties into the continued implementation of the Choose Love curriculum in Smith - a curriculum taught throughout all Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District schools - which seeks to ensure that students can employ positive behavior techniques in the face of challenges and adversity. The skills taught in the First Tee program promote a complementary philosophy - that practicing its core values and habits can lead to a healthy mind and body.

Photos of First Tee program instruction at Smith courtesy of LVJUSD
ABOUT LIVERMORE VALLEY JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
LVJUSD is an award-winning district that serves more than 13,900 students in transitional kindergarten through 12th grade at nine elementary campuses, two K-8 schools, three middle schools, two comprehensive high schools, and two alternative schools. The LVJUSD features International Baccalaureate Programmes and a STEM pathway, TK-12. The mission of the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District is to ensure each student will graduate with the skills needed to contribute and thrive in a changing world. For more information about the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District, please visit www.livermoreschools.org

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