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Equipment, Activities, and Other Categories:
Building and learning on a traversing wall

Why build a climbing wall?

To offer students a unique opportunity for developing balance, strength, flexibility, and coordination. Plus, climbing provides students with an opportunity to improve their communication, cooperation, courage, problem solving, and self-esteem.

Types of climbing walls:

Vertical—

- ? Advantages—vertical movement, some also incorporate the development of rope-handling skills
- ? Disadvantages—cost to build and maintain; inherent risks and danger

Traversing—

- ? Advantages—less expensive and provides students with the opportunity to develop some basic climbing skills while remaining low to ground; less risk and danger

Freestanding (boulders), portable (closing panels), and fixed walls—

- ? Shaped panels
- ? Prefabricated panels
- ? Do-it-yourself plywood walls

John F. Kennedy's Do-It-Yourself Plywood Wall

- ? 8 X 28 foot traversing wall that currently has over 160 holds
- ? (1 hold per 1.4 square feet) and two 16 X 6 ft high-density foam gymnastic floor mats with carpeting
- ? Total Expenditures \$1638.00

Cost \$938.00 (with 120 holds)

- ? We added another 40 large holds for \$200.00 after initiating the project.
- ? Manufacturers recommend at least 1 hold for every 2 square feet
- ? Two 1 3/8 inch gymnastic floor mats 6 X 16 feet

Construction materials (\$500.00) were donated—

- ? Plywood, framing materials, wood screws, nails, carriage screws, expansion bolts, paint, and self-adhering baseboard
- ? Assembly completed by the maintenance dept. with guidance from the APE staff

Reflections from my experience in building this wall—

- ? Drilling: line up the panels and drill more than one panel at a time (72 holes per panel—every 7" on the 8' length and every 5" on the 4' length)
- ? T-nuts: use 1/2in wood screws behind the t-nuts to keep the t-nuts in place
- ? To hold the mats upright against the wall we drilled holes into the mats and glued plastic piping with threads into the mats, which has webbing hooked over the holds

Rules or guidelines—

- ? Climbing is permitted with adult supervision.
- ? All climbers will have a spotter while climbing.
- ? No more than three students are allowed to climb at a time.
- ? The student's feet are to remain below the red line.
- ? Please hang the floor mats against the wall when finished climbing.

Learning on a traversing climbing wall—

- ? The wall is intriguing to students—think of the wall as a giant puzzle, in which the students are connecting the pieces of the puzzle as they climb
- ? Velcro is used on the wall to attach balls, letters, numbers, objects, and pictures that the students retrieve. The teachers have a wide range of items in which the students are working on and we incorporate these items into climbing activities. As a result, the students are focusing on a wide range of academic or life skills while they are climbing.
- ? Teach the students to:
 1. follow the safety guidelines
 2. look at their feet and turn their feet and (or) hips to help them climb—cues include—look at your feet; move your feet first
 3. look for the big holds or positive holds
 4. extend their legs to reach the next hold
 5. move laterally for students will want to climb upwardHave the students connect a sequence of holds or retrieve a series of objects without stepping off the climbing wall they will learn to move horizontally as opposed to climbing upwards, which will in turn help them increase the amount of time on the climbing wall.

Activities—

Follow the leader: the students take turns following each other using the same hand and foot hold as the leader while as they traverse across the wall

Climbing to retrieve letters, numbers, words, pictures, or objects: this activity can be used to build numerous academic and functional skills

Cooperative or partner-climbing: use a scarf or other object in which two climbers move across the wall simultaneously without letting go of the object

Eliminate the hold—climb across the wall and then repeat the movement, but without certain (color or marked) holds

Musical climbing (Red light/Green light of climbing) where students climb to music, but when the music stops the students must freeze

For some of those who use wheelchairs or walkers: have the student traverse the wall with their feet on the floor—cruising the wall with or without assistance

For those who are visually impaired introduce them to the wall slowly: have the student identify the big and small holds on the wall; when the student becomes comfortable with the climbing wall then have him or her step one foot onto the wall—provide the student with directional assistance and reassurance to let them know they are safe

Useful Websites—

Entreprises—*The Home Wall Manual* www.ep-usa.com

Cheap Holds, Inc.—*Need Some Advice?* www.cheapholds.com

Metolius—*Building A Climbing Wall* www.metoliusclimbing.com

Everlast Climbing www.traversewall.com

Passe Montagne www.passemontagne.com