

Athletic director creates exercise program at charter school

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When Mike Higgins was a student, the Coral Springs Charter School athletic director lost out on a college baseball scholarship because of academic ineligibility.

At the time, Higgins had learning disabilities that he was able to overcome through a then foreign concept. Today, that concept has come to fruition. Higgins has created the Kinetic Learning Academy (KLA) for students, which focuses on learning and exercising on bicycles and treadmills.

"If I'm ever in a position of authority where I can help others," said Higgins, referencing years ago, "I'll try to implement a program to help students like myself overcome learning disabilities."

When his friends and classmates went to the library to study, Higgins headed to the gym.

"I always had learning issues as a student and couldn't stay focused in a traditional classroom setting, no matter how hard I tried," Higgins said. "So, I decided to bring my books to the gym and quickly realized when I was moving, I retained better."

Dylan Ragin, a freshman junior varsity football player for Charter, reaped the benefits of KLA over the summer. He now wants to take the SAT exam early on to improve his baseline score when it comes time to apply for colleges. "It's great to learn while moving around. I feel like I focus more, especially when it comes to critical thinking," said Ragin, who has improved his math skills. "When I move around during my studying, I don't feel like I fidget as much as I would if I were sitting at a desk."

Higgins aspires for the program to reach a broad spectrum of students with learning disabilities, including attention deficit disorders (ADD).

"It's a way to learn, while increasing fitness levels through low intensity exercise," Coral Springs Charter School Principal Gary Springer said. "It's wonderful for our athletes to have an opportunity to combine exercise and learning, especially for those students who struggle in the classroom."

Since the program's inception, in which subjects participate two days per week for an hour, Higgins hopes to get more exercise equipment for the group-setting format.

"We use a projection screen with individual educational software. That way, if a student gets an answer wrong, they are notified confidentially and immediately," Higgins said. "It's an innovative approach to education without embarrassment."

This year's program begins Sept. 20.