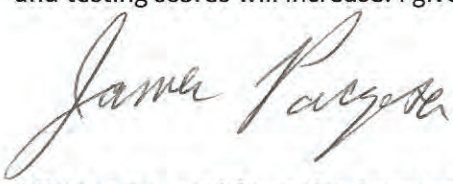
To Whom It May Concern:

In the fall of 2007 I became principal of Richard E. Miller Elementary (K-5) in Phoenix Arizona. Patti Mitchell, the P.E. teacher, along with the fourth grade teachers were in their second year of Operation Tone-Up. With the buy-in from other staff we expanded the program the next two years to include all of grade three through five. This program became an integral part of school moral and spirit for several reasons over the next three years. Teachers and administrators often worry about starting new programs that they fear may interfere with the precious academic time allotted to the classroom. However, academic knowledge and skills aligned to state standards are embedded within the Operation Tone-Up program. Functional text reading increases in importance as students progress through the upper elementary grades. By learning to read ingredient labels and analyzing the nutritional value, Operation Tone-Up gives that experience to students. Expository writing through persuasive writing is much more real to students when they have directly experienced the topic they are writing about. This program allows for the rich experience necessary for rich bold vocabulary and knowledge that can be applied to their writing.

Operation Tone-Up allowed students not only to learn academically, but stamina and self esteem rose dramatically at Richard E. Miller Elementary. I actually witnessed overweight students losing weight throughout the years. By progressively working up to a longer exercise program, the health of students improved as evidenced by lower blood pressure and increased stamina. Students felt proud of their accomplishments. In the program's final competitions, students encouraged each other to do their best. I was touched by the inclusion of a Down Syndrome student being part of the final competition in 2007. Her mom was especially pleased. Even faculty and staff were encouraged to become fitter. Several teachers lost weight or became more toned during the years I was at Miller. I myself lost 90 pounds during the final year I was principal at Miller. More importantly I became healthier and was removed from a nightly breathing machine for sleep apnea.

The Operation Tone-Up program can really help the culture and the climate of the school when properly and effective implemented. The principal of the school must be the educational and inspirational leader for maximum effectiveness. My experience saw increased parent involvement. Younger students looked forward to being in grades that had the program. Students were always excited when "Mr. Tone" made an appearance on campus for an assembly. Several times we received positive press coverage from a local television station. Ceremony and celebration are key attributes to a positive school climate. Talk about killing several birds with one stone. Too often schools receive only negative press. It is time to start highlighting the good things going on in our schools.

During an interview with a local television station I was asked why Operation Tone-up was so important to me with the increased accountability of testing in our schools. I simply answered that students can't be ready to learn and perform on tests if they are not healthy. By learning proper nutrition mixed with exercise, attendance and testing scores will increase. I give my full endorsement of the Operation Tone-Up program.



OTU testimonial from Jim Paczosa

Retired Principal of Richard E. Miller Elementary – Phoenix, Arizona