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[Pupils see fewer bruises with new gym floors](#)

Parents, teachers proud of raising funds for safer vinyl surface with foam cushion

By Preston Knight - pknight@nvdaily.com

WOODSTOCK -- W.W. Robinson Elementary School pupils are running all over what can be considered a victory amid Shenandoah County Public Schools' budget woes.



Both gym floors at the school are now fitted with a vinyl coating known as Gerflor, which includes about half an inch of foam underneath the surface. Installation was completed during winter break for the larger of W.W. Robinson's two gyms, and work on the other took place at the same time last year.

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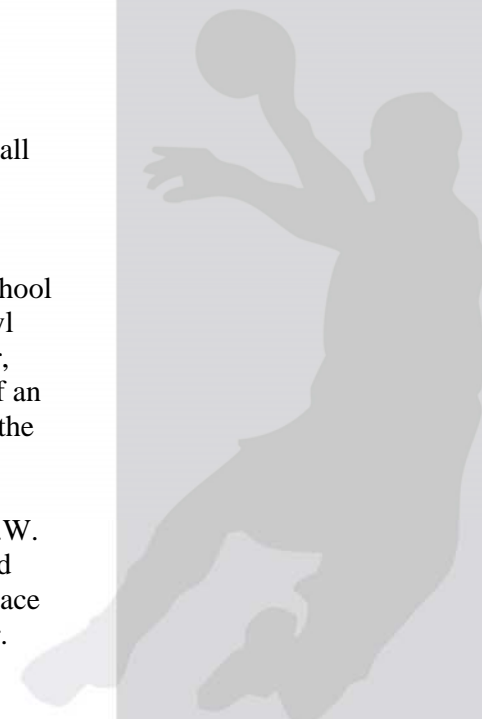
Alexus Shaw, 9, a fourth-grader at W.W. Robinson Elementary, skips rope on the school's new Gerflor gymnasium floor that was paid for by the school's PTO. Rich Cooley/Daily

"Once you can see the product, it's pretty much a no-brainer," gym teacher Thad Hockman said. "Do you want a concrete floor or a floor that reduces the force [on children's legs]?"

He estimates that injuries have gone down about 80 percent.

"The bumps and bruises," Hockman said, "you don't have those like they did before."

It all didn't happen without nearly \$70,000 in fundraising by the school's Parent-Teacher Organization, which stepped up when it realized that funding was not going to be available for a couple of years from the School Board. In today's budget climate, that sort of initiative is heralded.



The school system is usually quick to recognize the community for its assistance, particularly through donations, at the board's monthly meetings. But during budget work sessions this year there has been more chatter about the need for parents and supporters to dip into their wallets. Athletic and music boosters have often been identified.

W.W. Robinson's PTO meets with the school's administration each year for a "wish list" of items it can help fund, said its president, Laura Dawson. For the last two years, that list has started and finished with the gym floor.

Although the organization has raised as much as \$45,000 in a year for various things, the floor represented the first time all fundraising went toward a single goal, Dawson said.

"I honestly did not know the floors were concrete with tile on them," she said. "For our PTO, what it came down to was if we think this is really important, then we need to get it done. ... We try to impact as many students as possible. We figured the gym floor did."

The money raised included the installation of mats on both ends of each gym.

Dawson said there was no resistance from the community about raising money toward a non-instructional project. The only complaints were from people wondering why the School Board could not pay for the flooring.

When the topic was brought up more than a year ago during a board meeting, the members said the same thing. Money is just not there for the project in the county's capital improvement plan, they said. That led those involved at W.W. Robinson to jump at the chance to chip in.

Officials would like to see the process repeat itself throughout the county while revenue is on the decline.

"Our parents see the need and they stepped up," Hockman said. "It was just amazing, truly amazing."

<http://www.nvdaily.com/news/2010/03/pupils-see-fewer-bruises-with-new-gym-floors.php>

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