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New Program Focuses on Social Skills for Kids with Autism

By Jennifer Wake



MAPSS students take an art break with counselors before outdoor activities Photo Jennifer Wake

unsuccessful socially. "Our program supports kids in experiencing success both in physical activities as well as in social activities," she said. "They are taught physical activities that promote team work and group collaboration but they are also taught fitness activities that they can do themselves at home."

This fall, MAPSS will be offering afterschool classes at the Moraga Commons, as well as in Berkeley, Oakland and Walnut Creek, and it hopes to expand offerings to Lafayette in January. Class size will range from six to 10 students with a 5 to 1 student to staff ratio.

"The fall program will involve behaviorists along with fitness instructors, focusing on social skills, group participation, exercise routines, sports and calisthenics," Feierstein said. The typical age range for MAPSS is 5 to 18, but there is also a transition program for young adults over the age of 18 which will begin in September.

"We are teaching skills kids will use for life to build and maintain healthy bodies as well as healthy relationships," Akers said. "I don't know of any other programs that have a fitness focus with the collaboration of educational and behavioral support."

For information, contact Feierstein at wearemapss@gmail.com.

Reach the reporter at: jennifer@lamorindaweekly.com

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