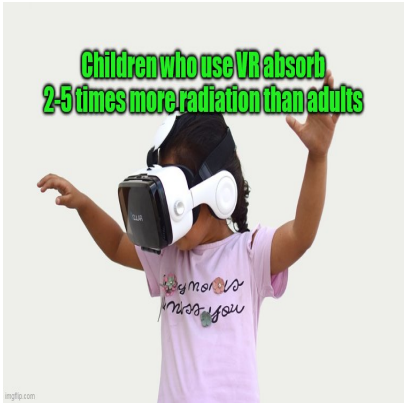

Elementary Students Using VR Goggles “funded through the district’s education foundation” Despite Health Risks

Description

Research has already determined that using Virtual Reality (VR) technology can cause behavioral changes, balance problems (see 1, 2), cognitive problems, eye problems (soreness, vision changes), headaches and other discomforts, skin issues, *as well as* other short-term and/or long-term health issues. Additionally, children absorb 2-5 times more harmful radiation than adults while using VR systems. Nevertheless, VR, AR (Augmented Reality), and Mixed Reality (MR) systems are increasingly being promoted and *funded* for a variety of purposes including educational curriculums (see 1, 2). Sigh.

From GovTech:

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iNNOVATE Labs Introduce Students to VR, 3D Printers

Funded by the district’s education foundation, San Luis Coastal Unified School District’s iINNOVATE program gives elementary students hands-on experience with coding, robotics, 3D printing and other technologies.

Mackenzie Shuman, The Tribune (San Luis Obispo, Calif.)

(TNS) — A little more than a dozen first-grade students sat in a group on the floor of a classroom at Sinsheimer Elementary School in San Luis Obispo on Tuesday morning.

“What animal are we looking at?” asked their teacher, Jessica Keach.

“Giraffes!” the young students exclaimed as they watched a pair of the African animals through immersive virtual reality goggles.

The first graders also used the VR goggles to see octopuses camouflage themselves to avoid their predators and learn how crocodiles' tough, scaly skin can protect them from most bites.

Earlier that morning, a class of fifth-grade students used the same technology lab to create computer codes that would dictate a robot's movements, create stop-motion videos with clay figures, draft intricate designs that a laser cut on wood panels or plan the next item they wanted to construct with the 3D printer.

The immersive iINNOVATE Lab at Sinsheimer Elementary is one of 10 across each San Luis Coastal Unified School District's elementary school in the county. It's part of a new initiative funded through the district's education foundation

The Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust made a $1.1 million gift to kickstart the initiative, and the San Luis Coastal Education Foundation has garnered another $500,000 from private donors to ensure all of its elementary schools can have the labs.

The iINNOVATE program started during the COVID-19 pandemic, and students picked up kits to take home with directions on how to build light circuits or program a robot. That program was honored by the state's Superintendent of Public Instruction as a 2022 California Pivotal Practice Award recipient.

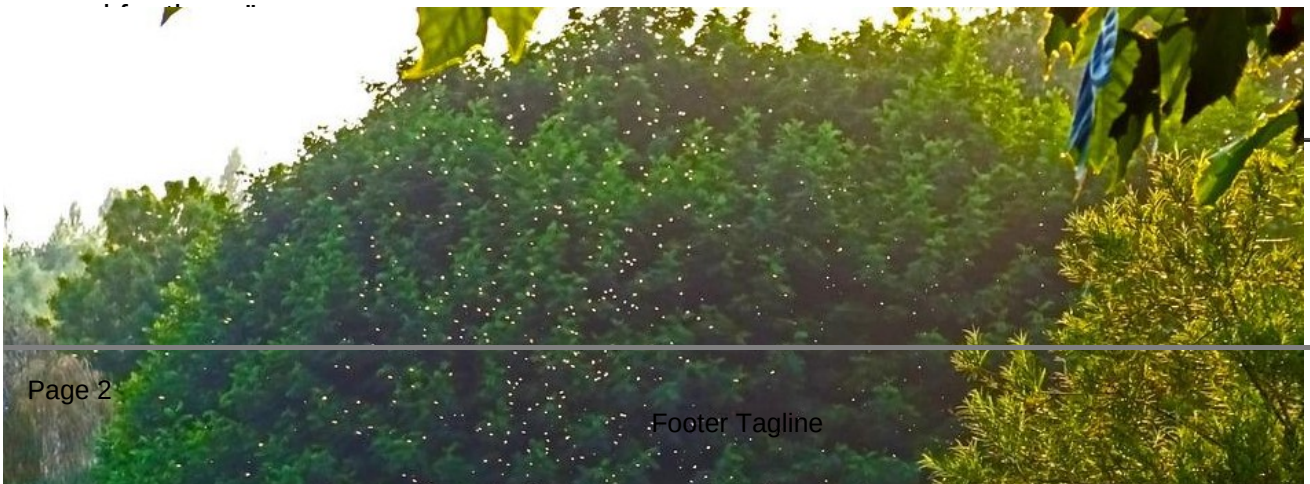
Now, about 3,700 students in kindergarten through 6th grade and 120 teachers are participating in the program.

"It's tied to the academics that they would normally have, but really doing it in a different, more creative; hands-on way," said Sara Garcia, a teacher on special assignment at the district who helps lead the iINNOVATE program. "We've also heard from the industry of what they want for their next workforce — and it's being collaborative, it's being technologically savvy, but also (knowing) how to think outside the box."

Garcia added that students learn basic concepts in the iINNOVATE lab — such as the difference between a solid, liquid and gas — but in a completely different way than traditional methods. For example, a student may receive an item and then have to code a robot to move to a square identifying whether that item is a solid, liquid or gas.

Katie Peters, another teacher on special assignment with San Luis Coastal, said the district has focused on how to implement the program equitably from the very beginning. That's meant ensuring the program is rolled out across all of the district's elementary schools, not just one or a few.

"It's not just one school that has a wealthy PTA (parent-teacher association) that can fundraise to do this. This is for everyone," said Peters, who works alongside Garcia. "You know a lot of kids don't have access to this kind of technology at home. So we're opening doorways that kids didn't know could be



also being endorsed for agricultural use (headsets worn by livestock!), court ordered treatment, first responder and military training (1, 2, 3, 4), medical treatment (see 1, 2, 3), military use and reducing social isolation in senior citizens. Earlier this year, a defense attorney in Florida even suggested that jurors be required to wear VR headsets during court trials.

By B.N. Frank

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