

Learning through play

College View adds playground equipment OKd for developmentally disabled students.

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Raul Roa/Staff Photographer

With the smash of a champagne bottle, College View School officials Friday christened a boat-themed piece of playground equipment designed to meet the needs of developmentally disabled students.

"It is silly to say it is a dream come true, but it is," said College View Principal Jay Schwartz. "Our kids need so much stimulation, and having something interactive to catch their attention is just awesome."

The play equipment, which was installed during the summer, includes a captain's wheel, a sand pit and a pair of bongo drums, all accessible to children who are in wheelchairs. The apparatus cost \$27,000, and was financed with money raised by the College View Foundation and a \$10,000 grant from the Community Foundation of the Verdugos.

Also there for the christening was the Crescenta Valley High School marching band and color guard, as well as a half-dozen Glendale Unified district officials.

Opened in 1984, College View School serves about 65 students with serious physical and mental development disabilities from Glendale, La Crescenta and Burbank.

The new equipment is the first in a three-phase project aimed at enhancing the school's playground, said Andrea Crissman, a College View mom and treasurer of the school's PTA.

The College View Foundation is already raising money to purchase a Sway Fun Glider, which will cost about \$60,000, and an additional climbing structure and activities panels, which will cost about \$124,000.

"For our kids, a lot of the learning that is missing is physical input," Crissman said. "If you can't stand, your joints, your bones, your muscles don't get that input. They are here every day, and the staff and therapists can work with them on this playground so they can learn a little bit how to play with things, because it is not evident to them."

Most parents don't have to worry about the accessibility of play equipment at schools and parks because the children are able to run and climb uninhibited, said Amy Rogers, a College View mom and head of the PTA.

But at College View, there is a need for equipment that meets the diverse limitations of a range of students, she added.

"It is amazing to see it here, and to know that their kids are going to be able to enjoy it is fantastic," Rogers said.