

The Columbus Dispatch

School days were never like this!

Unconventional start was planned, noisy

By Steve Wright
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Music thundered in the hallways, desks were pushed aside, and students were playing catch with flying disks yesterday during the first day of classes at The Wellington School.

Students hadn't staged a mutiny at the private school in Upper Arlington, but, by design, the start of the school year was far from traditional.

Boisterous instructors from SuperCamp, which is based in Oceanside, Calif., and stresses motivation and self confidence, were there to mix fun and games with serious learning skills.

A more childlike approach – in which students are willing to risk to achieve, can forget about failing and can concentrate on success – is part of the theory behind SuperCamp, said Mark Reardon, director of training and development for the company.

"When we're laughing and getting active and playing, we're really getting ready to do some real learning," he said. "The happy feelings lets the student remember the joy of learning, that learning is fun."



Peggy Williamson, left, faculty consultant for student affairs at The Wellington School, chats with ninth-grader Sarah Schlosser.

Reardon said he uses a lot of humor and charisma, but he is teaching students about asking key questions, being more efficient, writing clearly, pumping up their self confidence and communication better with each other and their teachers.

"There are a lot of good teachers out there, but we have to open the minds of those who are into total control," he said. "Teachers should learn from students as much as students learn from teachers. It should be interactive, exciting and fun."

David Blanchard, headmaster at Wellington, said, "I don't think teaching will ever be the same around here" as he watched his staff shouting out answers and getting involved in the learning techniques being taught.

Daniel Biru, 14, a freshman from Columbus' East Side, said the SuperCamp presentation "was pretty different from the routine first day of school" in the eighth grade last year.

"This beats getting assigned seats and homework," he said. "This is something people will be talking about."