

TeamUp!

Student-athletes from the UC San Diego Athletics Program are providing physical education to area elementary students that lack a physical education curriculum at their school, all part of a program called Team Up!

“Our students go two days a week to Del Mar Heights Elementary School and provide two sessions on each of those days,” says Ken Grosse, senior associate athletics director and staff liaison with the Triton Athletics’ Council, which sponsors Team Up! “They coordinate basketball, soccer, hula hoop, tetherball, four-square and other sports activities that get youngsters moving, involved, and learning sportsmanship.”

Del Mar physical education teacher Ian Phillip has witnessed the rewards of the program first-hand. “Team Up! has become a system of interaction between athletes and students that our children really look forward to each week,” he says.

Wendy Wardlow, principal at the elementary school, says that the organizers purposely have maintained an unstructured format for athlete and student interactions. “Having something formulaic or program driven wouldn’t have the same authenticity,” she adds.

Each UC San Diego student-athlete in the program volunteers for two one-hour sessions per quarter; between six and 12 University students are at each session. Elementary school students are in grades 1 through 6, and activities are offered before school and during lunchtimes.

Sometimes the elementary school students get a special treat. “A Team Up! highlight of the year for many of our students is attending a UCSD basketball game and then getting to play on the court during half time,” Wardlow says. “This is a very big deal for our kids.”

—*Patti Wieser*