



Transcript for the video:

Ready to Climb: Bringing the Climbing Walls to the CFDRC

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Dr. Darren Robert, Kinesiology and Health Education Professor: One day I was working around the tree, and young children came in and asked me if they could climb the tree in the center. And I said, “We’re not allowed to climb the tree. However, why don’t we try to get a climbing wall into our center?”

Claudia Ahern, CFDRC Lead Teacher: I was ecstatic. I’m so proud to work at a university that provides just quality movement experiences for children. We know as educators that children need lots of movement activities so they can grow.

Niloufar Rezai, CFDRC Director: Quite honestly, when he first told me, when Dr. Robert first told me that we were going to get this climbing wall, my initial reaction was fear.

Dr. Robert: Taking risks is important. Safety will be stressed every single time we work with the climbing walls.

Niloufar Rezai: We looked at walls that were specific to children of this age group. So once I looked at pictures and read up on it, I felt a lot more confident that this actually has a lot of benefits for children.

Dr. Robert: Right now it’s trial and error. We’re gonna find out what paths they like. See which ones are too challenging, which ones are too easy and then keep on molding it to make sure that it’s best for whatever, whatever skill level that they’re ready for.

Claudia Ahern: I knew they would be excited. The climbing wall was closed with a mat so it was really like a surprise, and preschool children love to be surprised. So when the unveiling came and the mats came down, I knew they would just giggle and be excited.

Dr. Robert: We actually received two climbing walls. The first one is an indoor twenty-foot-long eight-foot-high climbing wall. The one that’s indoors, we’re not allowed to go over two and half feet high with our feet.

Child: Why can't I go right up there?

Teacher: Because you can't go past the red line, remember?

Child: Why?

Teacher: Because you don't want to get hurt.

Child: Why is the red line here?

Teacher: That's so that you don't go any higher than that.

Child: Why?

Teacher: Because you don't want to get hurt. You don't want to fall off, remember?

Claudia Ahern: When the climbing wall was introduced, the children were explained two basic rules that you need to step on and step off, and that there was no jumping as one rule.

Teacher: Oh, remember to step down, right?

Dr. Robert: The outdoor climbing wall is glass. It's actually plexiglass, and you can see through it. The see-through part is best for teachers to be able to watch the children and monitor them. And it's also fun for the children to be climbing while another friend of theirs is climbing on the other side. So that one's 12-foot-long and six foot high.

Teacher: Way to go climbers. You are going right across, that is perfect!

Dr. Robert: There's a red spot off the mat and a green spot on the mat. What we're trying to do is get the child to realize that he or she cannot climb until they have permission from the teacher. The teacher is sort of acting like someone who would be holding a rope and belaying in the future.

Teacher: Ok are we ready to climb?

Children: Yeah!

Teacher: Alright where do we step to? The green one. And what do you guys say?

Children: Ready to climb.

Teacher: Climb on; let me see.

Dr. Robert: We have a lot of young children in this day and age who aren't very confident.

Child: I can't do this.

Dr. Robert: Maybe they're a very confident writer or they're a very confident reader, but they haven't been confident in the motor skills we've traditionally done. Now we're working with climbing, and it's a whole new atmosphere that some children you wouldn't expect to be confident or competent in this are really confident, and other children who you think would just fly right by are really taking their time and being a little bit more cautious. And it's great to see how they're reacting.

Child: See? Did it!

Claudia Ahern: They can develop a sense of accomplishment that they've done something that maybe they haven't tried before or maybe they're developing a skill and improving a skill they already have. It really affects all areas of development.

Niloufar Rezaei: When they use a climbing wall, they improve their eye-hand coordination. Cognitively, they learn how to move their bodies in space. Creatively, there's a lot of opportunities for pretend play on a climbing wall.

Dr. Robert: A lot of things we do in physical education also contribute to the social-emotional and the cognitive domain. The social-emotional domain where we're working on things like taking risks. We're working on taking turns. We're working on talking to each other and motivating each other to get to the next level that they haven't been able to get to yet.

Child: I did it!

Teacher: You did it? Awesome!

Niloufar Rezaei: Bringing the wall to the center has benefitted the child and family development resource center in a variety of ways. Of course, it's expanded our curriculum to include more gross motor opportunities, both indoor and outdoors.

Dr. Robert: I believe that the ideas that the climbing wall can help the children learn and understand are limitless. Whether we're talking about science, or we're talking about literacy—any one of these different subject areas can be taught using a climbing wall.

Claudia Ahern: The climbing wall gives a movement opportunity for the children. Children need various activities. When we talk about movement, we don't want children to just have one activity. We wanted to provide numerous activities, because that's how children develop their skills.

Niloufar Rezaei: In addition to the wall benefitting the children at the center, the Eastern community will also find many uses for the wall. For example, teachers in the public school come to our center under the guidance of a faculty member, and they learn how to teach children on the wall. So there aren't many places that students have that experience or learning, where they can actually practice teaching skills on a climbing wall and have the opportunity to do so.

Claudia Ahern: For me having the climbing wall was just like the icing on the cake. I incorporate movement into my room on a daily basis. So, when I heard we were having a climbing wall, it was just like, "Oh, my goodness, this is another way the kids can move and learn."

Niloufar Rezai: At the end of the day, it really was rewarding and worth all effort that we went through to get it.

Dr. Robert: Just to see the look on the children's faces is what's the rewarding part, and I know that sounds a little cliché, but it really is. But especially the ones who haven't been real confident and competent in the past, now just taking a hold and climbing across these walls. It's been marvelous.