

Sixth-graders gain teamwork, learn leadership skills

Leadership, teamwork and cooperation are a few key life skills that don't always come easily to youth. Wilson sixth-graders may find themselves more comfortable with these skills, and a few more, following their leadership training with the Anderson Park District at the Beech Acres Arts & RecPlex.

Each Wilson sixth-grade class spent a morning during the last week of September at the Anderson park participating in a variety of challenges. The afternoon was spent back at school reflecting on the day, writing about it and processing accomplishments.

The day itself was an opportunity for students to take risks and try new roles, explained counselor Jean Bode.

"We knew that this may push some kids out of their comfort zone, but we wanted them to be encouraged to try new roles and skills," she said. "Self esteem is raised by trying something new, not by doing the same things over and over."

Throughout the morning, the students worked in groups facing and solving challenges. The process allowed students to experience effective communication, teamwork, leadership, cooperation, problem solving and more. They also learned how to function as a group and identify their own place in the group. After each activity the students and the facilitators discussed and reflected on the experience.

Recreation Director Emily Armstrong and Recreation Manager Emily Buehler served as facilitators. The challenges faced by each group of students are the same, Armstrong said, but the way the students respond to the challenges differ greatly.

The Wilson staff members were pleased with the way their stu-



Working cooperatively, Wilson Elementary School sixth-grade students move as a group to get to safety over a pretend body of water. Moving across the "lily pads" are Haley Douglas, left, Rik Mukherjee, Sarah Kasper, Cassidy Schmidt and Kelly Kline.

dents faced the challenges. "We need for the sixth-graders to be leaders at Wilson," said Principal Frank Forsthoefel. "We talk to them about being leaders. This is an opportunity for them to realize and recognize the leadership skills that they have."

Students were enthusiastic about the experience.

"We got to do all kinds of activities," said Emily Balick. "Everyone worked together and used new skills," she added.

The experience also reinforced for students things that they

already knew about themselves, said Tate Bohan.