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Sixth-graders from Windy Hills Elementary School show their skiing form at Prairie Hills Golf and Ski Club, as they ski along with the club's owner, John Weber (center). For the students it was their Friday morning physical education class. (Hub Photo)

# Windy Hills meets Prairie Hills as students try their luck at skiing

By DIANE FELDMAN
Hub Staff Writer

PLEASANTON — It was Windy Hills meets Prairie Hills as sixth-graders from Windy Hills Elementary School in Kearney took to the slopes this morning at Prairie Hills Golf and Ski Club south of Pleasanton.

The 24 students, their teachers, principal and some parents were learning to ski as part of the school's physical education curriculum.

Dick Johnson, P.E. instructor, said he has been thinking about this idea for two to three years. He said the students at both his schools (he also teaches at Central) have been talking about skiing.

"My family and I ski and I thought it would be a neat experience for those who haven't had a chance to ski to be given this opportunity," Johnson said.

As a P.E. activity, skiing is is different from many Johnson teaches.

"So may times P.E. is ball activities or sports," Johnson said. "But part of physical education should be to prepare students for what they want to do later in life — for leisure time. It's important to instill these habits early." Skiing, like bowling, is that kind of lifetime leisure activity, he said.

This is the first time for the skiing program at Windy Hills, but Johnson said he hopes it isn't the last.

Following today's lessons, the program will be evaluated and parents and teachers will be given an opportunity to discuss how it went.

"We hope it can be a sixth-grade thing every year," Johnson said, noting that younger students at Windy Hills were already asking when their turn for skiing would come.

Johnson called Prairie Hills a "good hill" for beginners. "We bring our youngest here to tune up before we go to Colorado," Johnson said. "It's a nice way for a family to spend an afternoon."

Johnson said many people in the Kearney area enjoy skiing and he's surprised by the number of people he knows when he goes skiing in Colorado.

Before the students headed for the hill Friday, they were given instructions from John Weber, Prairie Hills owner. He explained about lift tickets and how the boots and skis should fit. He told about safety measures and why the students wouldn't be using poles. He told them that poles used by beginners cause 80 percent of the accidents.

Another thing they learned was how to get up — which was useful a little later.

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