Mind games

Davie school uses board games to help students

By Scott Fishman
STAFF WRITER

For educators at the University School, board games are about a lot more than fun.

First- or third-grade teachers at the Davie school are seeing positive results using Mind Lab's educational board games to teach a wide range of subjects and social skills.

Cory DeLaRue, second-grade teacher, has seen success among students playing games with a little international flavor.

This includes Quarto from Spain, which emphasizes grouping four pieces together in a row that share a common attribute. The

French game Abalone applies strategies where students develop an understanding of how certain pieces work together more effectively than others.

Manuels from Africa, Sheep from Israel, Rush Hour from Canada and a host of others also are used in the classroom.

"Students are using critical thinking and learning to be less impulsive as they begin to play the games and implement strategies that are introduced to," DeLaRue said. "There is an art to playing games, which helps to enhance and improve upon thinking and life skills. This program is designed to develop emotional, cognitive and social skills."

First-graders play one game for two weeks, in a 40-minute period, while second-graders play for a week or two based on the difficulty of understanding.

Third-graders grasp the rules at a faster pace and play a new game each week.

"I enjoy playing Abalone and Tic-Tac-Toe because I learn problem solving that helps me in school and at home," said second-grader Nicholas Pfister.

Third-grader Julia Musso enjoys Tic-Tac-Toe, dominos and Manuels because they help her get smarter and are fun to play.

"I have learned strategies like when playing Tic-Tac-Toe, always go to the center," she said. "You have six chances to win when you start that way."

Third-grade teacher Debbie Kohn said her students are very receptive to learning strategies. She also discusses how game strategies can apply to potential real-life situations.

"In one lesson, the game strategy transfers into a real-life discussion of what to do if a child is mean to you on the playground," she said. "In another lesson, we talk about more order. The students relate this to real life by planning ahead. We talked about planning for a birthday party and how you need to make many decisions before you purchase food and paper goods."

Since its inception in 1964, the Mind Lab Group has created thinking games to develop cognitive abilities and life skills. This is the first year the University School has incorporated the program into its curricu-