



Local Product Credited with Reducing Schoolhouse Disease

NEISD says it will expand use of Kleenhanz, other districts may follow
By Jim Forsyth
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Officials of the North East ISD are hoping clean hands are the key to a sharp mind, 1200 WOAI's Berit Mason reports.

The district has completed a pilot program in which some thirty elementary schools used a new product by San Antonio based Mendoza Group called Kleenhanz, which is an anti microbial hand sanitizer.

Jacinto "Speedy" Gonzales, Executive Director of the Safe and Health Schools Department for the NEISD, says the success the product was amazing. "Our department did a study when we had influenza, and we were having a lot of absenteeism," Gonzales said. "We compared five of them that used the Kleenhanz and five that didn't. We found that the five with Kleenhanz had a better absentee rate."

Doctors say the number one factor leading to the spread of several important childhood diseases is a failure of students to properly wash their hands.

Gonzales talked about one teacher who used Kleenhanz in her classroom.

"She had five kids absent in a six week period versus the other teachers that weren't using it, and they were missing 29 to 18 kids. Big difference," he said.

NEISD Superintendent Dr. Richard Middleton says the district will now use Kleenhanz in all of its schools.

Unlike other hand sanitizers, Kleenhanz is not alcohol based, which makes it much safer for children.

"Not every school in our district has sinks," Gonzales said. "We have no way of knowing whether the kids are actually washing their hands with soap, which is very important. So we wanted something that was more effective."

One third of all adults say they do not wash their hands after using the restroom, contributing to the spread of disease.

Middleton says he will report back to the school board son on the success of Kleenhanz in the NEISD, and will discuss additional steps to prevent illness in schools.

In addition to causing pupils to fall behind, absenteeism costs school districts money, because they receive state education funds based on daily attendance.

The Mendoza Group was formed by an Antonio businessman Randy Mendoza in 2003 with the specific goal of fighting what it calls 'the germ crisis that grips this country and threatens the human race as a whole.' It promises more 'innovative' products to prevent the spread of disease by facilitating better hygiene.

