

SIMON SAYS: 'BREAK THE RECORD!'

By Melody Guyton Butts • September 26, 2011



From right, four-year-olds Eliza, Lauren, Christian, Douglas, and Solana laugh as they play "Simon Says" on Friday, Sept. 23 at The Goddard School in Durham. Seventy-two students at the Durham school joined other Goddard School locations across the country in simultaneous game of "Simon Says" in an attempt to break the record for the largest game played. (The Herald-Sun | Christine T. Nguyen)

collective sigh as the tykes realized they were out of what was expected to be the world's largest-ever Simon Says game.

The Durham Goddard School franchise was one of about 370 across the country that did its part Friday to break the Guinness World Record for the instructions-driven game. At least 12,216 participants were needed to break the current record, set at the opening ceremony of the Utah Summer Games opening ceremony in 2007.

Seventy-two students at the Durham location participated, and 30-150 students and family members were expected to participate at each of the other 369 or so Goddard schools, leaving it all but certified that the record was indeed broken, said spokeswoman Jordy Patano.

The Simon Says game is just one example of the early-childhood-development chain's focus on playful learning, explained franchise co-owner Shashin Desai.

"Learning has to have a play component," he said. For example, instead of learning how to add from a worksheet, Goddard students learn by counting blocks, he said. "You're learning math, learning $2 + 2$, but you're not realizing that you're learning," he said. "It's fun."

The school is also focused on healthful eating, evidenced by the paper chef hats worn by participants in Friday's game. Provided snacks are always nutritious, and teachers check the lunches that kids bring from home to ensure that they're balanced, supplementing them with anything that might be missing, like milk.

The local Goddard School, managed by Desai and fellow co-owner Mehul Desai, opened in November 2010.

DURHAM – At exactly 1 p.m. Friday, and not a second before, the record-breaking attempt began: "Simon says ...," teacher Kelly Smith began, "put your hands in the air!"

A room full of antsy preschoolers – their game confined to the Goddard School walls by an early-afternoon downpour – complied, enthusiastically throwing their arms upward.

After a few more "Simon"-commanded instructions, came the first trip-up. "Touch your toes!" Smith shouted.

Almost all of the students eagerly obeyed, forgetting to listen for the requisite "Simon says" trigger phrase. And then came a

As for the Simon Says game, one very attentive 5-year-old was left standing in the end. What's it like to be the very best listener of all? "It feels great!" J.R. Robinson replied with a grin.

But his father, Russell Robinson, feigned disappointment.

"I'm kind of hurt!" he said, looking at his son forlornly. "He'll do what Simon says, but he won't do what dad says at home!"