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Isaac Bischoff, 14, a Coral Reef freshman, also made a return appearance to the camp. "I had a fatty liver and I had to learn to eat healthier. This program really helped. I lost 30 pounds and that will really make a difference."

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A STRUGGLING MIAMI HIGH SCHOOL STRIVES TO RAISE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE THROUGH FITNESS

MIAMI — Isaac Bischoff, 14, is a freshman at Coral Reef High School. He has a goal in mind: to raise his grades in science. To do that, he needs to be healthy.

That's the idea behind the "Healthy Bodies, Higher Grades" program at Miami High School, which aims to improve academic performance by focusing on physical fitness. The program is led by instructor Ariette Perry, who believes that a healthy body leads to a healthy mind.

Perry says that many students struggle with academic performance because they lack energy and focus. "When you're tired, your brain can't think clearly," she explains. "By getting them into better shape, we're helping them to be more alert and productive in class."

The program includes a variety of activities, from jogging and swimming to strength training and nutrition classes. Students are encouraged to take ownership of their health and to make positive changes in their lives.

For Isaac, the program has been a game-changer. "I used to be really out of shape and I was having trouble in my science classes," he says. "But now I feel like I have more energy and I'm able to focus better in school. I'm starting to see my grades go up, and that's great."

The school district has invested in the program, providing the necessary equipment and facilities. Perry says that she is proud of the progress the students are making and looks forward to continuing the program in the future.

But, more importantly, "the students learn how to take these concepts regarding their health — exercise, physical activity and nutrition — and apply it to their own daily habits," said Ariette Perry, chair of the Department of Kinesiology and Sports Sciences at the University of Miami.

That's why Fausto Rivera, 13, an incoming freshman at Coral Gables High, and Eric Richardson, 16, a Gables junior, are trying to master the mechanics of the jump rope on a steamy afternoon on the university lawn.

"This is the kind of exercise I didn't know about, but physically I have more stamina now," Fausto said between hops. The THINK program, he said, will help him succeed at soccer come the school year.

"I'm not staying home and being lazy, I'm out doing something instead," added Eric.