

Kids are 'Mad' for science lab

Johnston program teaches students in a fun way

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Kids did a series of fun, interactive experiments on Monday during a Mad Science Crazy Chemistry program at Horizon Elementary School.

The six-week, after-school program at Horizon, 5905 N.W. 100th St. in Johnston, is sponsored by Johnston Community Education.

During the Crazy Chemistry session Monday, kids learned about appropriate lab equipment vocabulary and had a chance to utilize the tools they learned about to do hands-on experiments with water tension and density.

"I learned that calcium chloride is salt and we learned some vocabulary, too," said Collin Laub, 9, of Johnston.

Mad Scientist Dan Chase of Des Moines' west side said Crazy Chemistry is a relatively new program for the organization that emphasizes hands-on, interactive experiments and activities.

Each week will focus on a different chemistry concept, Chase said. Kids will learn about the periodic table of elements, the molecular structure of compounds and pH levels. By the end of the program, kids will own a full set of lab equipment, including a beaker, flask, pipet and more. Children also will complete a worksheet each week that closely ties to the experiment of the day.

Brady Green, 7, of Urbandale was surprised to learn about how many ways scientists utilize lab equipment.

"I learned that they use pipets on thousands of experiments a year," he said. "I really like science - it's my favorite subject in school. My friend told me Mad Science was fun, so I wanted to try it. I'm going to keep doing it."

Kayla Chau, 8, of Grimes found out there's more than one way to stir substances when doing an experiment. Chase demonstrated how a magnetic stirrer works.

"That thing was really cool," Kayla said. "He put a beaker on the magnetic plate and it stirred the stuff."

Emily Liu, 8, of Johnston had no trouble remembering the vocabulary she learned during the session.

"We learned about a flask, beaker, stirrer, pipet and a graduated cylinder - it sort of looks like a really, really long measuring cup, but it's not," she said.

Emily also learned why beakers and flasks have certain shapes.

"If you try to stir in a beaker, all the stuff spills out, but if you put it in a flask, it doesn't spill," she said.



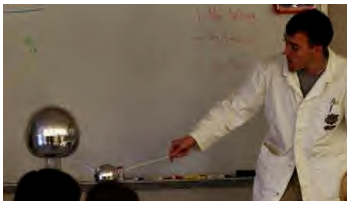
Worried but hopeful, class members gather around the Van de Graaf generator during a Mad Science class Monday, Nov. 5, 2007, at Horizon Elementary in Johnston. From left: Hope Cruse, Claire Stern, Hailey Ditter, Colby Laub, Sydney Ditter and Jens Rasmussen.



Hailey Ditter listens to information about electrons.



Mad Science teacher David Riddle builds up a static charge with hair and a balloon.



Mad Science teacher David Riddle's Van de Graaf generator snaps a bolt of static electricity.



Cole Eichacker of Urbandale reacts as puffed rice cereal flies around the room.



Ali Guilloz of Urbandale watches as static electricity pulls her hair.



Mad Science teacher David Riddle shows how a static electricity charge can illuminate a light bulb.



Puffed rice cereal flies off a paper plate on top of Mad Science teacher David Riddle's Van de Graaf generator.