

Hinkletown's Annual Academic Fair Celebrates Learning

Written by Administrator

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(Shopping News Photo by Donald Reese)

Hinkletown Mennonite School (HMS) students used everything from worms to maps to butterflies, popsicle sticks and marbles in the learning projects celebrated at the school's annual Academic Fair held recently. Focusing on hands-on learning and projects that connect academic work to students' lives, guests had much to admire as HMS students presented the results of experiments, research and investigations through the evening.

"What I love about the Academic Fair is seeing children use ordinary materials to demonstrate extra-ordinary learning," shared Dawn Landes, HMS Administrator & Principal. "The students are proud of what they accomplished as well as what they have learned. And the teachers have spent hours getting to know the interests of each student and how they learn best."

Students in grades three to five worked together on a Science, Technology, Engineering and

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Math (STEM) project focusing on Newton's Laws of Motion. Inter-grade teams of students created amusement park rides that moved a marble through the ride, powered by the forces identified in Newton's Laws. The rides were set up and operated by grade four students at the Academic Fair. Grade five teacher Matt Moyer said, "It was neat to see the hands-on problem-solving required by the students to get their rides to operate as they had envisioned. The collaboration among the team members, the trial and error process, and learning from their mistakes gives them real-world learning strategies that they will carry throughout their lives." Fifth grader Savannah Martin put that learning into practice, "I really liked the partnership and teamwork that we put into our project. But some-times each of us wanted to do different things so we had to make time to do those different things."

Grade four students pre-sen-ted the results of their long-itudinal stream study. Fourth graders trouted through the fields adjoining HMS to the Conestoga River each month, gathered water samples, recorded sounds and obser-va-tions on-site, and cata-logged macro-inverte-brates at each point in the year, charting the population change. "We didn't find many creatures in the winter, but found more in the warmer times," reported fourth grader Kyle Denlinger. "I thought we would find a lot more. It was interesting looking for the critters in the muddy, dirty water [from the stream bottom] and I liked going into the stream to get the samples."

"This study gave learning authenticity for the students while combining two science units and it integrated art and writing through their draw-ings of the changing land-scapes and through poems about the sounds they recorded throughout the year," shared Anette Raiser, grade four teacher. "It also gave them an authentic audience in presenting their results to the property owner."

Grade three students worked in groups to research countries around the world and present the culture and life in that country. Grade 5 students researched Ameri-can heroes and dressed up in costume as that individual for the Academic Fair presen-tations. Middle School students

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focused on science and technology in their projects. Sixth grade students dismantled an electronic device to identify each component and its function. Eighth grade students presented their science experiments with results and conclusions.

Grade seven students developed and built an aquaponics system as their Legacy project to present to the school. "[The Legacy Project] is something that leaves our imprint on the school," shared seventh grader Miranda Beidler. "We are creating something that will benefit the school after we leave." The students divided into groups to develop and build the various components of the system that will grow lettuces and herbs along with fish, both of which can be used at the school.

Even the primary grades practiced hands-on learning. Kindergarten classes studied oviparous (egg-laying) animals, charted the results of a pizza-preference survey, and made oobleck and green eggs and ham from Dr. Seuss's works. Grade one students experimented with symmetry by drawing their faces with half a photo of themselves. Grade two students researched historical figures and created a "Bottle Buddy" companion for their written research using two-liter soda bottles.

Hinkletown Mennonite School is located at 272 Wanner Road, Ephrata, one-half mile north of Route 322 in Hinkletown.

Shown in the photo, from left to right, are Lauren Eshleman, Michael Morris, Miriah Lehman,

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Sarah Lapp, Miranda Beidler and Evan Morales.