

# Students experience African culture

Sentinel & Enterprise

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Updated: 2017-07-18 04:32:56.742237

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FITCHBURG -- Camp S.U.N. students experienced Africa last week with drumming, dancing, art-making and artifacts, thanks to the Fitchburg Art Museum.

The museum sponsored a visit from Crocodile River Music, a Massachusetts-based program that promotes and performs African and African-influenced music, including Brazilian, Caribbean and Flamenco.

Drummers and dancers from the group led students through rhythms and dances, while kids in nearby workshops made kente cloth-inspired artworks and explored Africa through slides and artifacts.

Students also used the district's new Virtual Reality headsets to go on an African safari, and made their own traditional mancala game boards.

"The African dance was my favorite, because it made me energized and happy," said 9-year-old Eugenia Bocchino. "The drumming was really good."

Ten-year-old J'zziah Copeland agreed; he's also taken drum lessons and learned from his dad. "The dancing and drumming was really fun," he said. "You get to move the beat. They were really good teachers."

Crocodile River Music's presentations demonstrate the universal influence of African rhythms and melodies around the world. The group has performed at the art museum previously, and regularly offers concerts, workshops, lecture/demonstrations, residences and educational programs, including African Arts in Education for schools.

Camp Director Sue Tourigny said the community partnership with the Fitchburg Art Museum has been "amazing" for Camp S.U.N.

"It was so generous of the art museum to provide this program at no cost to our students," she said. "The staff that led the workshops was so engaging. Every single kid participated."

Camp S.U.N. (Students Understanding Nature) began July 5 and continues Monday through Thursday throughout July at Crocker Elementary in Fitchburg, along with Camp Journeys.

Camp S.U.N. is a 21st Century summer program offering students in grades first through eighth a variety of educational and recreational activities in the areas of science, technology, engineering, art, sports and the natural environment; 115 students are enrolled in the program this summer.

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