

Crocker parents wowed by 21st Century program after school in Fitchburg

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FITCHBURG -- Crocker Elementary School was filled with excitement Thursday night during the "Bring Your Parent" to the 21st Century After-School Program.

Parents flocked to the school -- 25 families to be exact -- to watch their children participate in four different enrichment activities. The fun-filled evening ended with a dinner prepared by the "Our Kids in the Kitchen" class.

"The 21st Century funding is to supplement and add on to the things that are going on during the school day," said Crocker Elementary School 21st Century Site Coordinator Kim Bellio. "Our goal is to provide academic enrichment through project-based learning, to also promote community service through service-learning activities and to provide positive social growth. All activities are connected to the standards that we teach throughout the school year, as well as activities that they just like to do."

Parent Andrew Van Hazinga, who sat in on the "Young Scientists" session, instructed by first-grade teacher Patty Noonan, watched his fourth-grade daughter, Adeline, and kindergartner, David, create lava lamps.

"It's great to see them do these projects and get excited about things," Van Hazinga said. "It's fun to see her interacting with her classmates and teachers and doing experiments."

"I want them to be excited and keep learning and have fun at school. I think this is a way to encourage that."

Adeline, who said she was "really excited" to have her father attend, also enjoyed the process of creating her own lava lamp.

"I really like how the bubbles go in and out," she said. "I really like science."

Fourth-grader Shawn Siart had his mother, Monica, attend the dinner. The 9-year-old says he enjoyed making the lava lamp.

"I'm going to shake it around," said Shawn Siart, adding he's going to keep it in his room.

Adrianna Kwapien sat in on "Crazy 8s Math Club" with her second-grader, Caleb.

"I think Mrs. Bellio does a fantastic job," Kwapien said. "I love all the teachers, and I love all the creative things they do."

In the math club -- directed by first-grade teacher Celeste Kearns -- the students and parents played a Dreidel game.

"It was nice to have them here for this event because they really like the Dreidel game," Kearns said. "We played it last week so we would be all practiced up. It's a Hanukkah game, and it's a good game for

the family."

Another big-hit activity was "Pet Pawsitive" where the children got to work with Luna the dog and community partner, Sara Carlisle. Luna followed commands and also did tricks for treats.

Third-grader Joseph Charron attended the event with his parents, Bryanna and Kyle. He loved "the tricks" while interacting with the rescue dog.

Luna said goodbye to the children with a steady diet of licks.

Bryanna Charron was thrilled to be able to spend more time with her son and see his routine at the program.

"It's very important to me," she said. "I think these little times are good."

Health teacher Tammy Tonry ran the "Crocker Cubs."

Parents and students participated in cup-stacking and dodgeball.

"The parents played and they were great," said the 23-year veteran teacher.

Bellio says she sees tremendous growth in the students who attend the after-school programs.

"Many of these fourth-graders have been in the program since second-graders," Bellio said. "We see physical growth, we see academic growth and we see emotional security and empowerment. We see the whole child growing and interacting positively in the school community, as well as beyond."

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