

Woodland Elementary School

Enrichment Clusters

This year, Woodland introduced Enrichment Clusters as part of its Gifted and Talented Program. The clusters offered all second grade students and, later in the year, all first grade students the opportunity to experience an extension of the content areas through small group interest clusters.

Each cluster developed an end product that was displayed at a fair attended by Woodland students. Projects included original written stories, an in-depth study of the eco-system, the creation of a life-size whale tail and student created games to address the learning needs of kindergarten students. The excitement surrounding student-centered, inquiry based learning was contagious.

Second grade students were given the opportunity to test the projects created by classmates who participated in the Gifted & Talented advanced level student inquiry learning. The G & T students worked with the Woodland Science teacher Noelle Mortillo to construct a “kid wash” as well as a catapult that launched water balloons into the school parking lot.

The students researched the projects, wrote a persuasive letter to the principal requesting the opportunity to include their classmates in the presentation phase, drew the schematic, researched the needed supplies, completed the construction, tested the projects and finally presented their projects to their classmates. The class enjoyed the opportunity to run through the student-designed and constructed “Kid Wash” and test the strength and accuracy of the catapult! Once again, the level of excitement around student inquiry learning was energizing.

Both programs were successful additions to the Makerspace/STEM learning program. Principal Marie Hardenberg is already making plans to expand the program next year.

