

Science Sci-Fari Adventure

*Newtown Road Elementary School
Virginia Beach, Virginia*

On a hunt to raise science test scores, the Science Action Team at Newtown Road Elementary School set its sights on a way to build interest in science. After much brainstorming, the team hit upon the idea of a science discovery night. They decided to call it the Science Sci-Fari Adventure.

This trek led parents and students through a maze of stations in the school gymnasium, where they made discoveries and found answers to various science questions posed for the event. The goal was to answer 12 or more questions to receive a science fair button. Each teacher selected a topic months in advance and put together a discovery station, with posters created by the students.

In the fifth-grade area, for instance, the questions included: “Which item did mold grow on the fastest?” Or, in the first-grade area, one of the questions was: “Did the plant that received Coke instead of water grow? How tall?”

“This was as much fun for me as for my child,” said one parent. “Wow, can you believe the number of people who turned out for this?” commented a happy teacher. More than 200 students and 150 parents—over half of Newtown Road’s student body—went on the Sci-Fari.

Held in the spring, the Sci-Fari Adventure culminated a year’s worth of work on a redesigned curriculum that called for Newtown’s teachers to teach science more actively. On the night of the Sci-Fari, families and students received two booklets, one to work

through that night and a larger one of activities to complete at home.

In addition to the school learning stations, the Sci-Fari invited several local science clubs to attend. The Back Bay Amateur Astronomers and the Old Dominion Earth Science Society (ODESS) both put up displays.

The day after the fair, teachers took students through the gym so that even those who could not attend the Sci-Fari could still view the learning stations.

The increased interest generated by the event showed in higher scores on the science exams. The school’s fifth graders improved by 13%. The science team’s success with this event has encouraged its members to begin planning for next year’s Sci-Fari. They are working on ways to speed up registration and bring in more community partners to share their own enthusiasm for science with Newtown Road’s students.

*Sharon Darling, Science Resource Teacher
(757) 618-6700
sharon.darling@vbschools.com*