

Mad Science



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Jason Stewart, better known as Dr. Ology, looks over the shoulders of Friendship Elementary School pupils Jamye Beck (left) and Tanner Sanders as they experiment with plasma balls.

Program piques interest of Friendship Elementary students

BY DARRICK IGNASIAK
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

DAVIDSON COUNTY – A group of scientists had Friendship Elementary School students at the edge of their seats after school on Thursday.

As a way to get students interested in science, Friendship Elementary administrators have invited Mad Science of the Piedmont to the school for the last four years.

To provide 62 students with fun and entertaining lessons on science, Mad Science of the Piedmont, a branch of the international science enrichment provider, has been at the school for the last four Thursdays. Parents paid \$70 for their children to participate in the after-school science program that encompasses a total of six Thursdays of instruction.

"This program places an emphasis on science, which I think is extremely important in today's world," Principal Debbie Dawson said. "I was a former science teacher, so I know the importance firsthand. There are so many careers that students haven't even heard

about. This sparks their interest in science more and hopefully, they will pursue an interest in that."

According to its Web site, Mad Science is the world's leading science enrichment provider. The company

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Jason Stewart
Mad Science site supervisor

delivers hands-on science experiences for children that are entertaining as well as educational.

"There is such a lack of scientists graduating from college," said Jason Stewart, site supervisor of Mad Science of Piedmont. "Our main goal is

to get kids interested in studying science. We try to be energetic and put on a show. We don't just want to stand in front of a classroom and lecture. We want the kids to get involved and be as hands-on as possible."

Friendship Elementary students were divided into four classes on Thursday. Under Mad Science's Enrichment Program, scientists gave lessons on bugs, sonic sounds, optical illusions, wacky weather, electricity and air.

"Most of our science is an elementary-based science," Stewart said. "It's stuff that if you are smarter than a fifth grader that you should be able to know. Unfortunately, most of us don't. We have to train on it, and we go through training constantly to keep abreast of the new science."

Tina Beckerdite, a Mad Science of the Piedmont instructor, said she attempts to break down the science material to a level where students can grasp.

"It's surprising a lot of times how much they already know," she said.

dignasiak@hpe.com | 888-3657