

Sequoyah students get hands-on experience in mobile agriculture classroom

C AND G NEWSPAPERS

By Joshua Gordon



The FARM Science Lab was set up at Sequoyah Elementary School in Macomb Township throughout the week of Oct. 2 for students to participate in hands-on experiments. (Photo by Deb Jacques)

Posted October 11, 2017



Amelia Miller, an education specialist with the Michigan Farm Bureau, worked with Sequoyah students Oct. 5, discussing everything from plastics to renewable resources. (Photo by Deb Jacques)

MACOMB TOWNSHIP — Getting out of the classroom and participating in hands-on experiments has been a focus of elementary science courses for years, Sequoyah Elementary School Principal Ted Zotos said.

And for a week, Sequoyah students were able to do just that right in the school's parking lot thanks to the 40-foot FARM Science Lab courtesy of the Michigan Farm Bureau.

The mobile science classroom set up shop the week of Oct. 2, and all 700 kids in kindergarten through fifth grade got a chance to explore the agriculture-based lessons.

FARM stands for food, agriculture and resources in motion. The older students participated in lessons ranging from learning about cell structure in wheat to observing the water cycle in process.

Younger students had the opportunity to examine the different parts of an apple and learn about the role of seeds in a window garden.

“We live in this area where agriculture is a big part of what is happening in Macomb County,” Zotos said. “I think the kids can make a connection between science and agriculture through this and reinforce the different science standards.”

Becky Cole, president of the Sequoyah parent-teacher organization, heard about the FARM Science Lab on social media before sending it over to Zotos. Like Zotos, Cole said being a state with a big farming presence, it made sense for the kids to learn about farming, crops and how that ties into science.

“I think this is a hands-on opportunity we might not have had otherwise, and it can enhance the learning experience,” Cole said. “I feel like there can always be more in terms of science and technology being introduced at the school.”

The FARM trailer is sponsored by several local farm bureaus, including the Macomb County Farm Bureau. The trailer was piloted in Oakland County last year and Sequoyah was the first Macomb County school to make use of it.

The trailer cost \$2,000 for the week and all students had up to 50 minutes to experience the mobile lab throughout the week. The classroom is staffed with a certified teacher and the lessons have a large STEM focus.

Zotos said it was great that there were different lessons based on age, and he thinks the kids can apply what they learned to what they experience in everyday life.

“Agriculture is a visible piece of our world, and the kids got a chance to learn how to create a specific type of corn and the differences between the different types of apples,” he said. “It opened their minds to the differences there are and how that is used when farmers are growing something.”

While it was only for a week, Zotos said getting elementary students a chance to experience science through hands-on activities helps them relate to what they are learning in a different way.

“Anytime kids can experience and touch science equipment and tools, the more their minds are enhanced, as opposed to just reading about it,” he said. “It gets their brain activated and thinking like a scientist and questioning the world around them.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Josh Gordon covers Macomb Township, Chippewa Valley Schools and the Macomb County Board of Commissioners for the Macomb Township Chronicle. He previously wrote for the Woodward Talk from 2013-2016 and attended Central Michigan University. Josh won Society of Professional Journalist awards for his work with C &G Newspapers. He is an avid fan of the Green Bay Packers, craft beer and movies.
