

Second Graders Play and Problem Solve At The Sciencenter

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Climate change may seem scary, but thanks to the Sciencenter, Kids Discover the Trail!, and some intrepid second-graders, the future of the earth is in good - if small - hands.

In the second floor classroom in the volunteer-built Sciencenter, second graders from Northeast and Belle Sherman elementary schools walked in hand-in-hand with their KDT! buddies. A Sciencenter educator engaged the kids in an interactive lesson about the five sources of energy - wind, gas, sun, water, and coal - and the differences between renewable and non-renewable energy sources. The class learned about the difficulties of coal and gas production, and about the negative effects of carbon-based energy production on the environment. Or, as the teacher put it, the way that carbon "acts like a blanket over the earth."

While the Sciencenter provided an excellent overview of climate change, this wasn't a lecture for second-graders. The children were eager to ask questions and provide their own suggestions for saving energy, like turning off lights and riding your bike instead of driving, and volunteered ideas for using renewable energy like windmills and solar panels.

In their next activity, they turned the abstract concepts of energy into hands- on reality. With each child paired up with their KDT! buddy from the other school, the kids went to work designing their own windmill blades. The Sciencenter provided the base, and it was up to the budding engineers to design blades that would produce the most energy when put before wind. They held their blade designs up to a fan, and if effective, the miniature windmill would produce enough energy to lift a cup of pennies. Then they diligently recorded the results of their experiment in their scientific journals. This demonstrated what makes windmills work, and how spinning blades create usable energy.

Of course, it wasn't all work and no play for these second-graders. After the group finished their lesson and experiment, they were free to explore all the exhibits the Sciencenter has to offer. With rooms upon rooms of interactive, touchable displays, these field-trippers could explore anything from deep space to the human heart.

Upon returning to their classrooms, all second-graders received a copy of the book, "Our Earth, Clean Energy", to take home after classroom use. A bookplate inside the front cover acknowledges the supporters of KDT! including individuals, corporations and foundations.

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