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Baldwin Park Unified Students Explore Enrichment Topics during Think Together Summer School

BALDWIN PARK – Matthew Chavez threw his hands in the air as the glider made of straws, paperclips, tape and index cards soared across the room to his partners, Josiah Cordero and Felipe Martin.

“That was excellent!” Matthew exulted.

Matthew and his partners, all rising fourth-graders, were exploring aerodynamics as part of Baldwin Park Unified School District’s summer enrichment program, run by expanded learning experts Think Together.

The program runs from June 4 to June 29 at five elementary schools, a middle school and a junior high school. For six hours a day, more than 1,000 students are exploring science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) topics, as well as English language arts and healthy living.

“Summer learning loss is a big issue, and programs like this not only give students a way to stay engaged when school is out, but they do it in an exciting and entertaining way,” Superintendent Dr. Froilan N. Mendoza said. “Think Together creates a terrific program for our students.”

At Foster Elementary, Matthew and his classmates were creating gliders capable of flying at least 10 steps. The boys’ strategy included a broken straw that, when pressed, allowed air into the glider’s body to help it stay aloft. Each time they adjusted their design, they recorded the changes on a data record.

Across the room, a trio of girls tried something even more revolutionary: Dereon Carter, Monique Perez and Samantha Salazar decided to flip their approach – flying their glider backward.

“When we tried to throw it forward, it would just go down and spin. So we turned it around and it worked much better,” Dereon said.

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“We wanted it to be unique,” Monique said.

While Samantha managed to get the glider to travel well beyond the 10-step goal, Dereon’s tosses usually ended up in a stall, a spin and a crash, prompting bursts of laughter from the girls.

In other classrooms, rising second-graders practiced language concepts, such as “ch” sounds and reviewed a story they read and corrected punctuation on a sentence. Still other students worked on reading comprehension exercises with i-Ready, a blended learning program that personalizes instruction.

In the afternoon, students explored healthy living concepts. At Bursch Elementary School, children reviewed a balanced meal concept and made trail mix, parfaits and smoothies. Outside, fourth- and fifth-graders played a game of tag as part of the group’s Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) program.

The summer program also offers field trips. This year, students are trekking to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes in Los Angeles and Kidspace Children’s Museum in Pasadena. Selected seventh- and eighth-grade students also camped overnight at San Clemente State Beach.

Mollie Ortiz, a rising second-grader, said she enjoyed her trip to the Natural History Museum – and she especially loved the dinosaurs. On a recent Thursday, she made slime after a visit from Professor Egghead, was looking forward to a reptile handler’s visit to Bursch and enjoyed trail mix she made with Cheerios, raisins and mini-marshmallows.

Her favorite part? “The marshmallows,” Mollie said.

PHOTOS

BPUSD_SUMMER_1: Fourth-graders review a glider design during Baldwin Park Unified’s summer school program at Foster Elementary, run by nonprofit Think Together.

BPUSD_SUMMER_2: Fourth-graders adjust a glider’s design during Baldwin Park Unified’s summer school program at Foster Elementary, run by nonprofit Think Together.

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BPUSD_SUMMER_3: Second-graders show off slime they made during Baldwin Park Unified's summer school program at Bursch Elementary, run by nonprofit Think Together.

BPUSD_SUMMER_4: Second-graders select Cheerios for trail mix in a healthy living activity during Baldwin Park Unified's summer school program at Bursch Elementary, run by nonprofit Think Together.

About Think Together

Think Together partners with schools and communities to pursue educational equity and excellence for all kids. As a nonprofit organization, Think Together innovates, implements and scales academic solutions that change the odds for over 150,000 students in California. The program areas include early learning, afterschool, school support services and leadership development for teachers and school administrators. For more information, call (888) 485-THINK or visit www.thinktogether.org.

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