



Wilson K-8 kids to attend launch of experiment

Students' work will go to space

Andrea Rivera Arizona Daily Star | Posted: Thursday, March 24, 2011 12:00 am

A science experiment produced by students at Wilson K-8 School will be launched into space next month at Spaceport America in New Mexico.

Some 17 students and their parents will attend the April 1 launch to see their project, "Inversion Impacts on Electrical Energy," take a flight to space aboard a 20-foot rocket, which will achieve a 65-mile altitude.

"It's interesting to work on something of this caliber," seventh-grader Brett Goldsmith said. "Sending something up in space is not something you can do in your backyard. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

Wilson's project was developed during a Summer of Innovation - Launch & Learn program held at the school in July. The school is at 2330 W. Glover Road in Oro Valley.

Seventeen students participated in the four-week camp, which focused on STEM subjects - science, technology, engineering and math.

Wilson teacher Teresa Fritton was the program's instructor.

She also will attend the 6 a.m. launch at Spaceport America, a commercial spaceport about 45 miles from Las Cruces.

Fritton applied to host the program at Wilson and attended a weeklong training session in Las Cruces to familiarize herself with the Launch & Learn curriculum, which included hands-on science activities and lessons on microgravity, the sun, Mars and other topics.

The program is part of New Mexico State University, NASA and the New Mexico Space Grant Consortium.

Fritton said she wanted the camp to show the students a different side of STEM subjects.

"A lot of kids get the wrong impressions that science is too hard or math is too hard," she said. "They are not thinking it's fun and exciting like social studies and art."

The students said the Launch & Learn program was packed with excitement.

"There were a lot of kid-friendly activities," seventh-grader Kayla Emmert said.

Launching bottle rockets was a camper favorite. They also enjoyed learning about gravity.

"Zero gravity is not the appropriate term. It's microgravity," Kayla said.

About 30 student-produced projects will be launched into space as part of the Launch & Learn program. Wilson's is the only project from Arizona.

Aspiring astronaut Josh Baca, a seventh-grader, said he enjoyed the opportunity to work with NASA.

"I've always been interested in space," he said.

Josh recently learned he's received a full scholarship to attend Space Camp this summer in Huntsville, Ala.

The students hope their project benefits mankind in some way.

"We're the next generation," Kayla said. "We have all these ideas that NASA could use to make their rockets better and improve technology."

Contact reporter Andrea Rivera at arivera@azstarnet.com or 807-8430.