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West Word Web Exclusives



Homeroom contests promote intraclass camaraderie

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Applied Sciences teacher Lisa Dunham's homeroom captured the inaugural homeroom competition that concluded Dec. 11.

In an effort to develop homeroom camaraderie, science teacher Anthony Serafini, social worker Jacqueline Lipka and counselors Hope Kracht and Ann Algenani organized the homeroom competitions that occurred for the past two months. The competitions consisted of team-based games that pitted one homeroom against another.

Lipka said that the goal of the games was for students to get to know their homeroom teacher and classmates better.

According to Alegnani, the idea was conceived after meetings held last year with various homeroom teachers interested in enriching the homeroom experience.

"One of the ideas that the teachers came up with was to have some sort of sports-based group activities to promote camaraderie and school spirit," Alegnani said. She added that the events were planned so that they would be gender-neutral so that neither gender would have a natural advantage.

Science teacher Anthony Serafini, whom Kracht, Alegnani and Lipka consider the "guru" of the homeroom competitions, explained a portion of the process.

"When we thought of what games to play, we thought that the goofier the game, the better," he said. "It used to be that students never worked together during homeroom, but now you see students working as a group."

The events in which the students participated included: the paper airplane contest, in which students had to build a paper plane that would go the farthest; the paper clip chain, a contest in which each homeroom was given 50 paper clips and attempted to create the longest chain possible under one minute; an inchworm race in which classes were required to reach the finish line by having the student from the back of the line reach the front of the line; the waiter contest, held during National French Week, in which students had to run from one end of the contest gym to the other end while carrying a tray of bottled water without dropping it and the turkey bowl, which involved homeroom students' knocking down bowling pins using a frozen turkey.

According to Lipka, the matchups between homerooms were created in a bracket by math teacher Matthew Fahrenbacher's programming class.

"On the week of the event, we sent out e-mails to the homeroom teachers about what event was to be held on that week, and then, it was up to them when they wanted to do it during that week," she added.

After weeks of competition, the finalists were narrowed to one homeroom per grade. Literacy Center coordinator Andrew Jeter's homeroom represented the freshmen; the homeroom of foreign language instructor Carolyn Sanchez represented the sophomores; English teacher Lia Sosa's homeroom represented the juniors and the Dunham's group represented the seniors. Alegnani said that the students from the four finalist homerooms received DECAlicious ice cream as a reward for going to the finals.

During Dec. 11's winter spirit assembly, the finalists competed for the championship. The challenge was to create the biggest "NW" by configuring the students from the respective homerooms. The winners of the challenge were the seniors.

Dunham said she did "very little" to lead the group. She explained that her homeroom was good about working together was able to get the job done.

"They took turns to lead each activity, and they worked very hard," Dunham added.

Dunham explained that the competitions brought out a new aspect of her personality.

"I am not much of a competitive person, but the [events] brought out [that] side of me," she said.



Applied sciences teacher Lisa Dunham's homeroom won the competition. Photo by Rexly Penaflorida II