

Magic and science at MHS

By **BROOKLYN FLINT**
Of the *Keizertimes*

Oobleck slime, elephant toothpaste (“exploding” foam), constructing siege weapons and building spaghetti bridges were but a few of the activities at the Science-Magic Design Camp the first week of July.

The program was led by Reuben Gershin, a science teacher who works in the EDGE online program. He has been teaching mostly physics and chemistry for more than 10 years.

“The point of this camp was to try to get them to do science. To do something, look at the results, change it, do it again, something like the spaghetti bridge. What worked, what didn’t, what can we learn from this kind of thing? And so that’s what we’re going to do with the paper airplanes,” Gershin said.

Paper airplanes was the activity for the day on Friday, July 9. The students researched different ways to construct their airplane, decorated it to their liking and held a contest to see how they would fly. The goal was to help the classmates look at science in a different light.

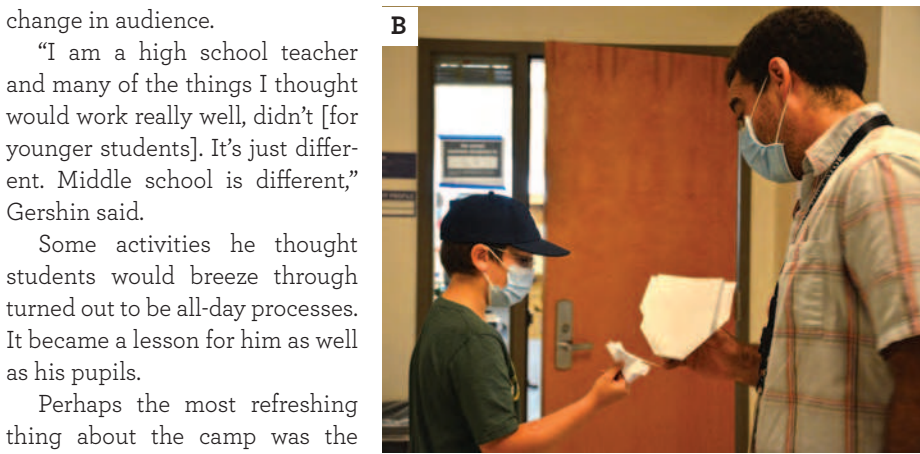
The camp is one of nearly 200 summer programs offered throughout the Salem-Keizer School District and one of dozens being hosted at McNary High School. The programs include science, music, film and much more.

Gershin taught in New Mexico for 10 years where he collected ideas for activities to present at the camp.

“In my career in New Mexico, what I used to do is I had a science club and we used to have science demo nights where the kids would put together stuff. I stole most of my ideas from that experience,” Gershin said.

The process of setting up the program started at the end of the school year, which was difficult in itself alongside the regular year-end chaos, he said.

Another challenge for Gershin was the



change in audience.

“I am a high school teacher and many of the things I thought would work really well, didn’t [for younger students]. It’s just different. Middle school is different,” Gershin said.

Some activities he thought students would breeze through turned out to be all-day processes. It became a lesson for him as well as his pupils.

Perhaps the most refreshing thing about the camp was the sound of student chatter that filled the room when they arrived. Gershin said students began camp pretty reserved but, eventually, started opening up and socializing more.

“They’re making those connections and they’re actually talking to other kids, which is a great thing right now,” Gershin said.

Making Oobleck slime, a liquid that acts like a solid when subjected to force (like punching it), was a favorite among campers and they felt trebuchet-building was the most challenging, but still fun. Several said they would be open to similar camp activities in the future.

A: Dylan McGuirk. B: Mason Fjeldheim and Rueben Gershin. C: Harper Jackman. Photos by BROOKLYN FLINT of *Keizertimes*

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