

Teaching Mad Science with Imaginative Learning and Oobleck

On a warm afternoon in late April, members of the United Way Young Leaders Society went a little mad. But their madness had nothing to do with the increasing temperatures; they were playing Mad Scientists with more than 100 students at Holaway Elementary.



The event, YLS & Mad Science, was designed to get students interested in fun learning through hands-on science experiences that are as entertaining as they are educational.

Besides, who doesn't like...Oobleck?

YLS volunteers showed the students how to make "Oobleck," a mixture of cornstarch and water. Oobleck gets its name from the Dr. Seuss book *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*, which follows the adventures of a young boy who must rescue his kingdom from a gooey green substance called Oobleck.

"The students were so pumped up to learn about science that it made the afternoon fun for the volunteers," said YLS member Josie Bayang. "The Oobleck was a big hit. The students loved making their very own Oobleck and taking it home with them."

Oobleck is a non-Newtonian fluid; it acts like a liquid when being poured, but like a solid when a force is acting on it. You can grab the gooey substance and it will quickly ooze out of your hands. The students rolled their Oobleck into a ball, jiggled it like a tambourine and squashed it like a bug. As they were happily making a mess, they were also exploring its unusual physical characteristics and learning about the properties of polymers.

Josie says stoking the students' curiosity is her reward. "As an engineer, it's so exciting to see students excited about science and technology," she said. "Hopefully, we are helping to spark the imaginations of the next generation of tinkerers, inventors, engineers and mad scientists!"

One of the primary goals for YLS is to provide positive role models for students in Southern Arizona. "YLS Volunteers are more than just teachers. They are resources for students, almost like big siblings," said Julie Wolfe Beadle, Vice President of Resource Development and the Young Leaders Society. "Our members love volunteering at Holaway because it allows them to be role models and to act like kids at the same time."



The Holaway students were also treated to a wild and crazy science show by Mad Scientist Caleb Clinkingbeard, of Mad Science of Pima County. Mad Science is an entertainment company that was launched in 1985 by college students. Dr. Clinkingbeard delighted students, teachers and YLS members with science experiments that included bubbling potions, fire, dry ice, and "burp" juice.