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Pleasantville students fly kites to learn about geometry

By DEREK HARPER Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, June 16, 2010



Eddie Saquino, 15, tries to get his kite in the air for an exercise in Darlyne de Haan's eighth-grade math class Wednesday at the Pleasantville Middle School.

Photo by: Staff photo by Danny Drake





PLEASANTVILLE - Children launched colorful pyramids into the skies Wednesday, part of a lesson on geometry from Pleasantville Middle School math teacher Darlyne de Haan.

As de Haan walked to the school's track Wednesday morning, she grew excited.

"Oh, I feel it, I feel a breeze," she said.

The still, gray sky threatened rain and to at least postpone de Haan's project. Then, good news: "I feel a breeze, it feels good!" de Haan said.

At the track, her 20 advanced eighth-grade students put the final touches on their kites.

The students had built the tetrahedral, or pyramid-shaped, kites out of drinking straws, glue and bits of string, all covered in colored tissue paper.

They attached a string to the top point of the pyramids, as well as streamers to the bottom corners for more lift.

The first part of the lesson was building the kites and getting them aloft. After doing so, de Haan, of Galloway Township, said students would receive extra credit if they could determine how high up they were.

For that, students used homemade inclinometers, which measure angles. Students would watch their kites through the tube, attached to a protractor. Then, using basic geometry, they would figure out how high the kites flew based on the angle of the kites and their distance away from them.

Mia Alston, 14, said building the kites was a challenge.

"You have to measure the surface area," she said while making preparations for launch.

Her kite did not initially launch, so she taped a red piece of crepe paper to a corner before getting it aloft.

Other students walked the perimeter of the track, their kites swirling and diving.

The kite of Mia's friend Richetta Brown, 14, rose in the wind until she was out of string. It slowly returned to earth as she watched.

"Now to figure out how high it was," de Haan said.

De Haan said Wednesday marked the first time she had conducted the kite exercise in her two years at Pleasantville Middle School. She said it helped her students develop problem-solving skills.

"It makes them think," she said, "instead of being fed all of the time."

Eddie Saquino, 15, said the lesson was fun.

"I hardly ever got to fly kites when I was younger," he said.

Another student, Talib Tiller, 14, walked along the track with some classmates, joking.

"I now know what I must do. To master your kite, you must love it," he told the other students. Turning to another boy, he said, "Joseph, love your kite."

"It's good," Talib said later. "I learned without a tail on your kite, it won't balance itself. It will go around all crazy-like and break."

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