

Edgar Summer School Offers Fun and Learning

Edgar Summer School was a huge success. From cooking to coding to chess, the Edgar Summer School program offers something for students of all ages. The sessions, which ran Mondays through Thursdays from June 17 to July 18, had classes for students in 4K through twelfth grade.

Swimming has always been a popular class offered for second through eighth grade students. Other courses like Babysitting 101 and Hunter's Safety prepared students for activities outside of school while classes like Adventures in Reading and Math offered reinforcement of academic skills.

One of the most popular classes at the elementary level was Book Cooks, which combines culinary lessons with reading and hands-on activities. For example, each week had a theme: One week the theme was marshmallows. Students read books about the topic and then made Rice Krispies treats and marshmallow slime.

They also competed against each other in relays holding a marshmallow on a spoon and built structures out of marshmallows.

Teacher Shelly Borchardt said the students were very excited to work in the kitchen and also enjoyed the related activities.

"It's fun to watch them get so excited," she said. "Everybody wants to take the class. It's a fun time."

Another popular class was Learning to Code with Minecraft, which was offered to middle and high school students. Students learned the basics of coding using the video game where players build and populate worlds made of block-like creatures and structures. Teacher Andrew Diestelhorst used a program that allows students to create their own blocks of code to create and manipulate their worlds instead of using pre-set settings. The program was self-paced and students combined playing with Minecraft and working on their coding skills.

Diestelhorst said many students have taken the class for 3 or 4 years in a row in order to work their way through the entire program. In addition to learning the mechanics of how to code, students learned about syntax, grammar, and precision since computers need directions that are absolutely precise. A capital letter instead of a small letter can make a big difference.

They also learned important lessons in collaboration.

"They really enjoy working together," Diestelhorst said.

He has taught the class for nine years and now has former students who became so interested in computers while taking his class that they have graduated from college with IT degrees.

The only summer school class that met on Fridays was Chess, which was offered to students in third through twelfth grade. Teacher Colin Hanson offered chess as an activity during lunchtime at the elementary school and took over the summer school class after the previous teacher left.

Students learned strategy and openings and played games with Hanson and each other. They also played online matches.

"It's not only teaching the kids the game but also trying to push strategy and understanding of the game," Hanson said.

He was also hoping to have enough students interested in forming a chess team that would compete against other schools next school year. Some of his students have already participated in tournaments and have done very well.

Chess offers lessons that apply to other facets of life, he said. To succeed in chess, you need to think before you move and assess the consequences of your actions, for instance. It's also a game that stresses sportsmanship and transcends age, gender, and geography.

"You don't have to speak the same language to play the game," Hanson said.