



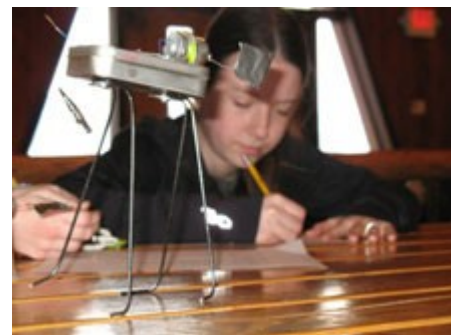
An Opportunity for Parents to get Answers about Montessori

Scientific Method: First, Pose a Question

By Katrin Frye, 2-27-08

There's a whirring, like fans, and a light chattering of metal on wood as mint-tins-turned robots spin, shake, and slide across tables at the Flathead Valley Montessori Academy.

"Your robot's so cool Caroline, it goes straight," says FVMA student Ellie Eberts. This is the final day of a more than eight-week project. For the better part of two months, one group of third-through-sixth graders from the Kalispell Montessori School has traveled out to Somers to work with Middle School mentors, the seventh- and eighth-grade students of FVMA.



The scholars created legs out of old hangers, and, in one case, a cup and attached a small motor to old mint tins. They attached a weight to the motor, and through varied designs of size, shape, weight placement and duct tape, they made vibe robots.

Caption: FVMA student Ellie Eberts records observations as her group tests their robots. - Katrin Frye for the Beacon

"We're trying to figure out how to make the robots go in a straight line," says FVMA student Kat Delby. FVMA instructor Jeff Pernell says the underlying goal of this joint-school project is to teach the scientific method. Pernell breaks the scientific method down for the kids; first, they're asking a question – will their robot go in a straight line with legs all the same length? Second, form a hypothesis, a prediction of what will happen. Then, test. Students changed variables of the experiments, like the surface the robot was on, and recorded their observations. They came together as a group at the end to report their findings. From there the hypothesis was either proved, disproved, or simply led to more questions.

The group discussion dynamic and mentoring are big facets of the Montessori Method. The next group of elementary students will work with the older students on creating "mini planets" in jars with water, bugs, and plants. Again applying the scientific method to learn about what makes an ecosystem thrive or die.

The Flathead Valley Montessori Academy is hosting a Parent Information Night Thursday 6 p.m. "For all those parents who are considering [Montessori] and don't have enough information to make a choice," says head instructor Stephanie Pernell. The campus is at 330 N. Somers Road, off of U.S. Highway 82 near Somers. *The school is asking for those interested in coming to RSVP at 857-3303.*

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