



PHOTOS BY MANTA POPAT / ARIZONA DAILY STAR
Charlie Dryer 12 lower center guards the bowling pins during a game of Bean Bag Foot Tag at Homer Davis Elementary School's Skills for Success after-school program

After-school programs engage kids

By Andrea Rivera
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Homer Davis Elementary School's doors don't close when classes are dismissed.

The Arizona Department of Education awarded Homer Davis a five-year 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant worth \$500,000 to offer an after-school Skills for Success program at the Flowing Wells school.

The school, 4250 N Romero Road, offers programs for different grade levels from 2 to 5 p.m. every school day.

"The goal with the program is to keep kids engaged with after-school activities that will, in

turn, benefit their homework completion rates and also increase their (test) scores," Homer Davis Principal Brett Bonner said.

Reading and writing, technology, homework, recreation and other activities are offered to students as part of the program.

Special classes, such as Mad Science and a KidzArt class, also are offered through the grant-funded program.

Plant Explorers, for students in grades 4-6, meets Fridays to maintain the school's new turtle habitat.

Older students also can volunteer to help out on days when

they aren't scheduled to attend the program.

Fifth-grader Kendra Barillas helped second-graders with their homework last week.

"It's a great program," she said. "The kids are learning and it's fun because the kids are happy to be here."

First- and second-graders participate in the after-school program Mondays and Tuesdays, Wednesdays are reserved for fifth- and sixth-graders and Thursdays and Fridays are for third- and fourth-graders.

On her day, Kendra takes part



Jorge Gamboa, 6, right watches Julian Nunez 6, as he works on a leaf stencil to go along with an art project about fall during the grant-funded Skills for Success after-school program

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in recreation, computers and reading and writing.

"If I wasn't at Skills for Success, I'd be bored at home doing nothing and trying to figure out what to do," she said.

Centennial Elementary School, 2200 W. Wetmore Road, also received a five-year \$500,000 grant to fund a Skills for Success program at its school.

Six of the eight schools in the Flowing Wells Unified School district offer Skills for Success programs on their campuses.

Walter Douglas and Laguna elementary schools and Flowing Wells junior high and high school also have programs.

Richardson and Hendricks elementary schools are not eligible for the grants.

Schools have to have at least 50 percent of their students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch to be eligible. Test scores also factor into eligibility.

Flowing Wells works collabo-

ratively with Flowing Wells Extension Programs Inc., a non-profit agency that provides services to the Flowing Wells school district, to obtain the grants.

Bonner and his staff didn't learn they were awarded a grant until early August.

That meant he and his site coordinator, Kerrie Hankinson, only had a few weeks to pull together the program.

Skills for Success at Homer Davis started Aug. 24.

"We took off well," Hankinson said. "It's a good feeling knowing you are doing something good for the students."

Some 230 students participate in the program and as many as 90 can attend on any given day, Bonner said.

Homer Davis enrolls 450 students.

Parents have responded well to the program, Hankinson said. And she should know — her two children attend Homer Davis and participate in the program.

"I love it," she said. "Both of my children are very artistic and they are learning more skills in the program."

Second-grader Veronica Lozano enjoys art and homework.

"We draw pictures of flowers," she said.

She completes her homework during the program so she has more time to play outside when she gets home, she said.

Opportunities for families also are built into the grant.

Homer Davis will offer a series of workshops during the school year open to families and the entire Homer Davis community.

A recent workshop taught parents how to interpret their children's test scores.

"We want to keep connected to our parents and community and let them know our doors are open and we want them to be involved," Bonner said.

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