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Updated: Mar 01, 2008 - 12:16:26 am CST

Wright Answer

By Kate Weber | Daily Chronicle

What is the degree of axial tilt on planet Earth? Or, possibly even harder, what is Joe Jonas', of the Jonas Brothers, favorite food?

Fifth grade curriculum, trivia and culture were tested Friday night at Wright Elementary School during the fundraiser "Are U Smarter Than a Wright Fifth Grader?" Teams of adults were matched against teams of fifth-grade students to answer questions, test their knowledge and win bragging rights for one year.

Head organizer and fifth-grade mother Trisha Maxwell thought of the idea while watching the television program "Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?" and thought that a similar event could be a fun way to involve parents with the subjects their fifth-grade children are learning, and to raise money for the school. Proceeds from the fundraiser will go toward the fifth-grade graduation at the end of the year and will also be given to the fifth-grade teachers to purchase supplies for the next school year.

"It is a good way for students to support their school and to help the incoming fifth graders," Maxwell said.

The questions were also meant to serve as a review for all of the students, who will be taking the Illinois Standard Achievement Tests next week. Each of the questions were either written by the fifth-grade teachers at Wright Elementary or by the students themselves about any topic, including science, geometry and even High School Musical, a popular Disney franchise.

"We wanted to make it more fun than just the standard questions," Maxwell said of adding the fifth-grade "culture" questions.

Before the competition began, Russ Nelson, 31, father of fifth-grader Taylor, hoped he would not be needed as a contestant, but signed up to be a backup if more parents were required for the game. Nelson said he did not prepare for the questions and would be more concerned for his daughter than for himself if he were to get a question wrong.

"I just don't want to embarrass my kid," Nelson said. "I can go home and not come back to the school, but she can't do that."



Sean Connors, 10 (right), peers across the cafeteria at the scoreboard during a tight matchup as he and Kwaleja Casey (from left), Alyssa Herrmann and Rory Gallagher take on three adults Friday night during Wright Elementary's fundraiser "Are U Smarter Than a Wright Fifth Grader?" Teams of adults competed against teams of students at the school to raise money for this year's fifth-grade graduation and next year's school supplies. Chronicle photo KATE WEBER

Having watched the television show at home with his family, Nelson said that he is often tricked by the questions on the program.

“Some of the questions are pretty common-sense, but some of them are definitely harder,” Nelson said. “It all depends on which question you get asked.”

Once the questions started flying at Wright, age played a large factor in the ease of the answers.

Adult contestant Brendon Gallagher realized during the game that much of the curriculum covered in fifth grade was the same as when he attended school, but that he had shortly thereafter forgotten it.

“Why do I need to know that kind of stuff when all I have to do is look it up online?” Gallagher said. “I know I learned it, but I don't need to remember it.”

Whether they knew the difference between a line and a ray or how to spell onomatopoeia, parents and teachers were excited to see the energy behind their children's answers.

“Just look at them,” Gallagher said. “It's great that the kids are getting so charged up about learning.”

Photographer Kate Weber can be reached at kweber@daily-chronicle.com.

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