

## Education

### Faring well with science

**Incarnation School students submit their projects to an esteemed crop of judges.**

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Young, inquisitive minds explored pressing scientific questions — like which kind of fruit has the most Vitamin C, and whether there is a connection between high blood pressure and the consumption of soda — at Incarnation Parish School's science fair on Monday.

Students explained their projects to judges in the school's auditorium, where the judging was expected to continue today, and awards for the top projects will be given out next week, parents said.

Parents organize the fair each year to strengthen students' science and math faculties, parent Jennifer Bunt said.



Incarnation School students Eliana Roney, 12, and Mia Avalos, 12, talk Monday about their science fair experiment, which shows how chemicals affect the environment. (Roger Wilson/News-Press)

"The exposure to the scientific method and the process is just amazing," she said.

Students picked their own project, within the areas of life science or physical science. They also had the option of creating their own invention instead of doing a traditional project.

Some of the students developed projects that were based on their own personal experiences.

Eleven-year-old Gabriela Campo, for instance, wanted to see which kind of drinks she consumed had the most sugar.

The idea came to Gabriela because her mom sometimes chided her for drinking sugary sodas, she said.

"My mom, she's a health nut," Gabriela explained.

Gabriela developed a project called "Got Sugar?" that examined the quantity of sugar in several popular kinds of soda and juice.

She hypothesized that juice has as much sugar, or more sugar, than soda. And when it came to the seven kinds of drinks she looked at, she was right. It was the cranberry-raspberry juice that had the most sugar per quantity of liquid than any of the sodas she examined.

"Even if it's 100% real fruit juice, it still has natural sugars," she said.

Asked what she thought she'd be drinking after doing the experiment, Gabriela answered with one word.

"Water," she said.

Jasmine Romero, 12, tried to determine whether diet soda or regular soda had an impact on an individual's blood pressure.

"My mom drinks a lot of soda and so does my grandma. I wanted to show how bad it was for their blood pressure," she said.

Before doing the experiment, she guessed that the diet sodas would cause blood pressure to climb higher, because diet sodas are high in sodium, she said.

For the experiment she had both her mother and grandmother drink cans of various sodas and diet sodas at different times. She tested their blood sugar 15 minutes after they finished each drink, and again after 30 minutes.

There wasn't a clear pattern in the results, Jasmine said. The experiment was inconclusive.

The experiment should have been more highly controlled, Jasmine wrote on her project poster board. Next time, she would control for things like the time of day and the physical activities the participants had done recently.

Erik Hovland, a computer engineer at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, judged some of the student work. One of the benefits of learning about doing science projects, Hovland said, is that it teaches students about the scientific method, and that process opens doors to more advanced learning.

"If they get that sort of stuff down, they are able to do a lot of critical thinking," Hovland said.

It's also a way to get students who may not take to science when they read about it in books interested in the subject, Hovland said.

"You get to see what's fun about science," he said.

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