FLASHES OF BRILLIANCE

Preschool teacher Alyssa Proia, left, works with Maisie Corcoran with one of the new student science kits at the Moody School in Haverhill.

TIM JEAN/Staff photo

Kendall DiStefano, 5, uses a flashlight in an experiment about light sources. Students at the Moody School in Haverhill have new student science kits.

Science exploration gears up at Moody School

By Mike LaBella
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HAVERHILL — Children at the Moody preschool center learned that the sun isn't the only source of light that can cast a shadow.

Using small flashlights available in their new science resource center, they proved to themselves that any light source can cast a shadow.

"This is fun because we get to use flashlights," exclaimed five-year-old Kendall DiStefano as she illuminated her hand in front of her classroom's whiteboard, thus creating a shadow of her hand.

Her teacher, Kim Gilmore, said that one of the state's science curriculum standards is the exploration of shadows and that having new science supplies such as flashlights allows for more hands-on exploration.

"We have a lot of math and literature materials but with new curriculum standards, we needed science materials as well," Gilmore said.

The Moody, a prekindergarten center for typically developing children and those with special needs, recently held a ribbon cutting ceremony for its new science resource

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SCHOOL: PTO helps make fun lesson happen

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center.

With the financial support of the school's PTO, teachers were able to purchase multiple physical science kits, life science kits, Earth science kits and student scientist kits containing things such as safety goggles, magnifying glasses, balloons, egg cartons, corks, eye droppers, spray bottles and other items children can use to explore the world around them.

Teachers say the kits are a jumping off point for exploring things such as the weather and the seasons as well as identifying Earth materials, understanding the phases of the moon, identifying where plants and animals live and how animals grow and change, identifying physical properties such as sinking and floating, magnetism as well as liquids, solids, gases and more.

TIM JEAN/Staff photo

Rosalie Richardson, left, and Austin Zefta push a truck up a ramp as they conduct a force and motion experiment with a new student science kit used at the Moody School in Haverhill.

Three large bookshelves hold new and old books in the area of all the sciences, and there are bins full of recycled materials to use for science experiments, and there are various science activity kits.

Principal Maureen Gray said her teaching staff developed new science lessons to go along with the materials and aligned lessons with the state's 2016 Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum. She said her teachers alter their lessons to accommodate all of Moody's more than 200 children, including those with IEPs or individual education plans.

She said the next step was to acquire science learning materials, kits and other items to go along with the curriculum.

"The PTO stepped up to the plate and raised money to purchase new science supplies," Gray said, noting that the PTO bought $1,000 in gift cards while the school earned enough points from a book fair to purchase an additional $600 in science materials.

Teachers say the new supplies open up a world of exploration, such as the study of clouds, where children filled up glass jars with water, topped them off with mounds of shaving cream, then dribbled drops of food coloring onto their fluffy, white "clouds."

Children stared in amazement as the colorful droplets filtered through the shaving cream, descending like the rain this experiment emulated.

"The kids loved it," said Alyssa Proia, an integrated preschool teacher. "They also loved their safety goggles."

During one experiment on force and motion, Proia set up science activity sets that made her classroom seem like play land.

Children pushed little plastic trucks up plastic ramps to get a feel for how much force was needed to reach the top, then began adding weight to the little trucks before repeating their experiment. When they were done they drew images of their trucks and ramps to show their parents when they got home.

"A year ago we were doing more science learning through literature and reading aloud," Proia said. "Now it's more hands-on and we have more tools to work with."

Even something as simple as plastic loupes (small magnifying glasses) got children excited about the exploration of leaves, only with far more detail than they could see with the naked eye.

"The children love using them," Proia said.

Gilmore said her students were thrilled when using a science board game to explore the mixing of colors. They flicked a spinner that stopped on a color, which they had to create using markers of different colors.

"We mixed blue and yellow to make green, and red and blue to make purple," four-year-old Lucas Marcoux said. "I learned a lot about colors."

Gilmore said the new science materials allow for more hands-on exploration and that is helping to develop skills the state is requiring children to learn.

"There is only so much you can tell a child," Gilmore said. "They need to experience it as well."