

Lunar Eclipse Makes A Shadow Over West U. Elementary

Interactive Lessons Led by
Rice University Professor



Dr. Robin Ward, of Rice University School Mathematics Project team, uses a light bulb and two balls to demonstrate a lunar eclipse to West U. Elementary students.

By Elizabeth Fordham

In anticipation of the lunar eclipse on Wednesday, Feb. 20 - an event that will not repeat itself until December, 2010 - students in Lori Levitt's West U. Elementary kindergarten class participated in an interactive lesson taught by Dr. Robin A. Ward, clinical assistant professor and associate director for curriculum integration for the Rice University School Mathematics Project team. Ward is also a West U. Elementary parent.

Using children's literature as a springboard to a two-day exploration of the moon, students developed a list of "moon facts," then physically modeled how the earth, moon and sun interact, resulting in night and day, phases of the moon and a lunar eclipse. A take-home worksheet allowed students to use the internet to determine which moon phase occurred on their birth dates. Dr. Ward later returned to West U. Elementary to create a bar graph of the moon phases on students' birth dates and further model moon phases with an interactive classroom project in which students spread chocolate icing on vanilla wafers.

The integration of math,

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science and children's literature into the lunar eclipse study provides students with multiple venues to a complex topic while also focusing on West U. Elementary's math and science magnet curriculum.