

'nChaiLights

Only at the NEMJDS: An Arcade Centered Around Community and Learning



A few weeks ago, our Innovative Learning Center became a "video game arcade," but more importantly it was a place for our students, families, and community members to celebrate learning (which is certainly nothing new at the NEMJDS)! Our students started learning the basics of coding at the beginning of the year, and during the Arcade Night, the entire community had the opportunity to see their learning on display! Our students created video games using Scratch, a coding program developed by MIT, and if you had a chance to play their games during the arcade, you could see how different and creative each game was!

All of our students participated. In Kindergarten, each student brainstormed ideas for a game with the sixth graders. Ms. Carter then combined these ideas into a single game featuring the students as playable characters in the game. After learning about programming this past year, the kindergartners were able to understand the algorithms and logic behind their game. Our first and second graders worked together to create their games, incorporating various interests and helping each other along the way, while our third through eighth graders worked on their own games. But in true NEMJDS spirit, our students all helped each other develop their games. This was also a chance for students to step up as leaders. Upper schooler Harris not only helped his classmates finish their game, but also he helped a younger student as well!

For many of our students, this was their first time working on a video game, and throughout the year, they further learned the meaning of attention to detail and persistence. It was not uncommon to see students working at recess or after school to get their games just right, and last night that hard work certainly paid off. From Sofia's intricately leveled game with diamonds and arrows to Marlie's game created to mirror the Webkinz game, our students came up with an idea and executed it using the building blocks they have developed through all of their classes.

From games dedicated to saving animals to football players scoring touchdowns, our students had the opportunity to create games that reflect their individual interests. When asked about the process, upper schooler Lielle explained the steps and how through



this process she learned to keep trying when something gets hard. Fifth grader Asher actually created two games as he showed off his mastery of using coding sources.

We loved that our students had the chance to share their learning and games with the entire community. From parents, to grandparents, to board members, to alumni, to siblings, throughout the night people were jumping from SurfacePro to laptop to try out all of the games. It was amazing for us to see our students articulately explain their games and the steps that went into their creations! Thank you to all who came to play our games and celebrate our learning!