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### Water Festival Fun

By [Ruth-Ellen Cohen](#)

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By [Ruth-Ellen Cohen](#)  
Bangor Daily News

ORONO - Science can be fun, fifth-graders from SAD 70 Elementary School in Hodgdon agreed Tuesday after making ice cream as part of a learning activity at the Northern Maine Water Festival.

"And tasty too!" 10-year-old Jordan Wilson added as he licked the creamy concoction off his plastic spoon.

The pupils, among the more than 600 fifth- and sixth-graders who participated in the daylong educational event at the University of Maine, had just been given a lesson in how salt lowers the temperature at which water freezes.

Guided by scientists Laura Wilson and John Jemison from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, the pupils took a plastic bag containing "mystery liquid" — a combination of half-and-half, sugar and imitation vanilla — and inserted it into another bag filled with ice and salt.

Then they happily shook, shook, shook the containers.

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Dillon Meserve, a student from MSAD 70 in Hodgdon, makes ice cream as part of the Northern Maine Children's Water Festival, held on Tuesday at the University of Maine in Orono. (Bangor Daily News/ Kate Collins)



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As the ice in the bag melted, it drew the heat from the half-and-half mixture, turning it into the vanilla treat that the whole class obviously enjoyed.

Teacher Vivian Hynick praised the activity for being "real life."

"When it's a hands-on activity, it's something they remember and internalize," she said.

Making science fun and exciting is just one of the goals of the festival, which is held every other year for northern Maine schools and which features classes, presentations and exhibits — all with a water theme.

The idea is to help pupils and teachers understand the threats to water quality and what they can do to keep water clean, said Barbara Welch, who does education and outreach for the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, the festival's lead organizer.

"We want kids to come away feeling like they can make a difference," said Welch.

Festival activities also are intended to help pupils understand the role of water as an animal habitat; its uses in meeting human needs; the different forms water takes in the water cycle; and water conservation.

Another aim is to help develop student interest in careers related to the environment.

Wilson said that, before coming to the event, some pupils took a test answering questions including what is the most common water pollutant, how important is clean water, and how can they conserve and protect water.

They will fill out a similar questionnaire later to determine whether they benefited from the event.

Examining the numerous educational displays set up at the field house, a number of teachers said Tuesday morning that their pupils already had picked up some valuable information.

Teachers Judy Thompson and Lynn Weston from Brownville Elementary School said the topics covered at the festival connected well with the Maine Learning Results academic standards.

Youngsters need to do their share to take care of the environment, said Thompson. "They know it's up to them to be stewards for the future."

Brownville Elementary School pupil Nicolle Padilla, 10, was all smiles as she described a display featuring water creatures including a lobster,

starfish and sea cucumber.

"I really liked touching the animals," she said.

Debbie Carver, Jonesport Elementary School teacher, said the festival was well worth the nearly two-hour drive.

Her pupils had heard about solar energy and "learned water facts" such as that all food contains water and that it takes 1,500 gallons of the stuff to make a fast-food hamburger.

Water knowledge is particularly valuable for her pupils, according to Carver.

"We live on the water — our economy is based on water resources," she said. "Many kids have lobster fishermen for parents. They realize that water is a pretty vital resource and that they need to take care of it."

Also attending the festival were pupils from Bar Harbor, Bangor, Troy, Old Town, Hampden, Alexander, Trenton, Thomaston, Orrington and Holden. Sponsors included the Department of Health and Human Services Drinking Water Program; Hancock County Soil & Water Conservation District; Penobscot Nation; Union River Watershed Coalition; and the George Mitchell Center for Environmental and Watershed Research.

**Ruth-Ellen Cohen**

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