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Piscataway school celebrates diversity

By *JARED KALTWASSER*
Staff Writer

Students, parents and staff at Randolphville Elementary celebrated the school's diversity Wednesday at the third annual Multicultural Celebration.

The event featured the food, dance, song and crafts of two dozen cultural backgrounds. Students at the school can trace their roots to countries in South America, the Caribbean, Europe and Asia — and all were represented Wednesday.

Principal Perry Stio said the school began the tradition when he first started as principal.

"Our reason for doing it is, when I came on board three years ago as principal we saw about 45 percent of our students were Asian," he said.

Stio said he wanted to make sure that parents from all backgrounds felt welcome at the school. He said the Multicultural Celebration was one way to accomplish that goal.

"My concern was, I wanted to get these parents involved and feel acclimated to the program," he said.

The past two years the event was held at the end of the school year. But Stio said that did not leave much time for newly involved parents to stay involved. This year, the event was moved up to November in order to better capitalize on the momentum of the celebration.

The school has about 500 students in grades K through 3. Stio said he expected about 500 people at yesterday's event.

Visitors at the event traveled around the school's gymnasium tasting food from different countries while learning about the unique cultures. The night also featured 16 performances, featuring song and dance from the countries. Students also made handprints on a poster as part of a project called "Hands Across America."

"The purpose is for us to learn to have respect for people's cultures," Stio said.

He said early elementary is a good time to teach children to appreciate diversity and respect differences.

"I think kids at this age are more open to learning new things," he said. "They all get along at this age."
