

Crockett recognizes SharkFinder students

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More than 100 awards were presented to Crockett Middle School students participating in the SharkFinder program Thursday.

The SharkFinder Awards Assembly was held in the gym, which was filled with students, teachers and parents cheering

on students who found shark fossils in unsearched fossil media to find shark, ray and skate teeth from ocean sediments dating back millions of years.

Priscilla Hernandez, eighth-grade art teacher at Crockett, said 57 students found one fossil, 16 found two and one student was recognized for finding three.

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Fourteen-year-old 8th grader Kevin Camacho, who discovered three fossilized teeth, receives an award from Liaison Specialist Bridgette "Sharky" Casas. Crockett Middle School held their SharkFinder Awards Assembly, where they honored students that found fossilized prehistoric shark teeth in their SharkFinder program.

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Students

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Crockett was the first middle school in Odessa to host the SharkFinder program. This took place during art classes in late September and early October, Hernandez said in an email. Students worked in cross-curricular fashion by using inferencing skills, scientific processes, writing methods, and art techniques.

Students were presented a Certificate of Accomplishment in recognition of their contribution to SharkFinder Citizen Science. When a SharkFinder participant finds something scientifically significant, they are acknowledged by name in a resulting professional publication.

PICK Education is a collaborative program created by the Ector County Independent School District Innovation Department. It is aimed at bringing real-world problems into the classroom and having students solve them. Learning can also happen across curriculums and many partnerships have been formed with many universities.

Bridgette "Sharky" Casas, liaison specialist for PICK Education at Ector County ISD, said the excitement among the students was "unbelievable." Casas said she especially enjoyed seeing the special education students being acknowledged like everyone else.



The program is now spreading to other middle schools in the district.

Hernandez said she had her students sketch and draw shark's teeth and create paintings.

"... I'm really proud of this group of kids. They did really well," Hernandez said.

Principal Maribel Aranda said this has been an awesome experience for students and something "totally new" that many of them have never done.

"We even got to include our specialized classroom kiddoes in there, so they were able to participate and be part of this experience and then for them to actually find something. One thing is for them to work stuff in the sand and all that and learn about microscopes and things like that, but then to actually find something and then be recognized for it, that's great," Aranda said.

Eighth-graders Kealy Curtis, 13, and Kenia Paola Rodriguez Alarcon, 14, enjoyed SharkFinder, as well.

"I think it was a cool and a good experience for young kids to have," Curtis said.

Alarcon said it was interesting, fun and made it easier to understand science.