

Modifications to and observations on miniature kites

Project: Montana State University AREN team constructed miniature kites (based on Glenn Davison plans) at MSU Family Science Night, Thursday, March 1. 535 people attended; about 300 made kites. Overall, kids and adults really enjoyed this activity, and – if they followed the instructions – the kites really flew!

Materials

- Tissue paper (*Experimented with copy paper and plastic tablecloths; tissue worked best*)
- Mylar (roll of 24" x 8 feet) (*Experimented with audio cassette tape; mylar worked best*)
- Silk thread
- 20" straws (bought in packs of 200 for about \$20)

Equipment

- Tape dispensers (many)
- Scissors (several)

Other

- Signs /banners publicizing the activity/project
- Signs or laminated sheets with step-by-step instructions
- Cardboard template(s) if kids will be cutting their own tissue paper
- Large surface area for construction plus chairs

Preparation

- Pre-cut tissue paper for Rokkoku and Koren Fighter Kite designs
- Pre-cut gold mylar tails (Hard to cut; allow enough time; best if kids don't do it)
- Marked off 18-inch spans with painter's tape on table (for thread) (Kids tended to cut the thread way too long, thinking longer is better)

Observations

- Kids under about fifth grade require parent's help
- Kids (and parents) want to experiment with the design ("be creative"), but those kites do not fly. Need a gentle way of telling people to follow the instructions
- "Being creative" can also use up your materials supply
- Kids will try to take a big straw (because they're fun) without making a kite
- Need to find the balance between "helping" and "doing it for them."

Possible extensions

- Make a list of questions we as facilitators could ask (either orally or on a sign) that encourage kids to think about the design process
- If lots of time and small group, could experiment with various designs before "unveiling" the field-tested design