

School boys score better in science

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Despite the increasing number of women entering the field of science, a national survey of school children says boys still do better in science courses than girls.

The Second International Science Study released this weekend warned if the trend continued, the United States would fall short of its goal to provide the finest level of mathematics, science and technology education in the world by 1995.

The findings were based on the study in 1983-84 of science pupils in the fifth and ninth grades and 12th-grade physics students.

The study compared students' performance with those tested in the First International Science Study in 1970. In both studies, boys significantly outscored girls in their knowledge of science, with the greatest differences lying in the area of physical science.

The differences in performance between boys and girls widened as the grade level increased, except for the 12th-grade physics students who showed the smallest gender disparity.

In a test given to fifth-graders, the study showed, girls did better on biology questions dealing with balanced diet and knowledge about seeds, and on physical science items about why a rubbed comb picks up small bits of paper and procedures to use when studying rocks brought from the moon.

Boys, on the other hand, did better on most physical science questions, and those pertaining to gravity and electrical conductivity.

Scores from a test given to ninth-graders showed boys did significantly better on physical science questions on the position of the planets, and girls did better in biology, including questions about heredity, seed germination and the location of the human organs.

On the 12th-grade tests, boys scored higher on all items but one. The greatest disparity occurred on a traditional physics question that involved calculating the tension on a thread supporting objects of different masses.

Despite the gender disparity, school children today know more about biology and physical science than their counterparts did in 1970, according to the study.

Mardi Gras festivities liven up

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Carnival season swept New Orleans over the weekend with 18 Mardi Gras parades that halted traffic and attracted masked revelers who carried torches, tossed doubloons and danced through the streets.

Police coverage was increased to control the crowds at the parades, and no other incidents were reported.

A parade in the New Orleans suburb of Chalmette was marred by violence late Saturday when a driver ran into three parade-goers, then was pulled from his car and beaten by an angry crowd.

Balls, parades and parties will continue daily until Feb. 19, known as Fat Tuesday, the day before the Roman Catholic season of Lent, a solemn time traditionally devoted to fasting and prayer.

Mardi Gras parades began weeks ago, but freezing weather kept attendance down until last weekend, when clear skies and temperatures in the upper 50s encouraged the gaiety.

New Orleans Saints quarterback Richard Todd helped kick off the weekend Friday night, when he served as king of Gladiators, a group — or krewe — that rambled through the streets of suburban St. Bernard Parish.

A new parade group, Palmares, added a twist to the Mardi Gras traditions. Its Saturday afternoon parade abandoned the old-fashioned floats pulled by tractors and opted for self-propelled displays built around modified school buses.

Several parades took place on fashionable St. Charles Avenue, where street car traffic was halted for hours as parade watchers tried to catch the trinkets thrown by the masked krewe members on horseback and on floats.

Some of the night parades, such as the Knights of Sparta procession on Saturday night, featured hand-held torches known as flambeaux. The torch bearers were sometimes rewarded with coins tossed by people lining the streets.

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