

Dentist leaves students with something to chew on

By Paula Lloyd
The Fresno Bee

Take this quiz. What foods are good for your teeth: apples, cheese, candy, water, carrots, soda or cookies?

If you answered apples, cheese, water and carrots, you're right, and you did as well as the students in Carol Ayala's second-grade class at Edison Bethune Charter Academy.

The quiz was part of a visit by Fresno dentist William Netzley and his employees Corryn McQuown, Diana Gonzales, Wendy Azares and Yvette Guerrero, who for two years have adopted Ayala's class in the south Fresno school.

Ayala calls them "special visitors." They come to her classroom once a month to teach her students good dental hygiene and good health habits, but they do not give dental exams.

"We're going over good foods this time," Netzley says. "It's really good for them," Ayala says. "They realize there's someone else, besides their school and their family, who care for them.

"And it's an incentive to

work harder," she says, because the students are eager to show visitors their school-work.

"All those good grades, that's what keeps us coming back," office manager Gonzales tells the students.

McQuown, a dental hygienist, goes over the answers to the quiz. "Is candy good for your teeth?"

"No!" the students shout in unison.

Also on the quiz, the children circled the number of times they should brush their teeth each day: zero, two or six. The right answer is at least two times, McQuown says.

To emphasize the lesson on good foods, Netzley and his staff hand out plastic bags containing an apple, carrot sticks, cheese and a new toothbrush.

For K'Lin Lee, 7, the lesson hits home. "I love cheese," he says, quickly peeling the wrapper off a stick of string cheese.

"Cheese is good for your teeth."

Across the table, Angelica Gaytan, 7, looks at her new kid-friendly toothbrush with red, blue, yellow, green and orange bristles.

Netzley's office adopted Ayala's classroom because Ayala and Gonzales have been friends since fourth grade. Netzley does other community outreach projects, including a Halloween candy buyback. He will buy back Halloween candy at \$1 a pound and donate it to the Community Food Bank.

Ayala says it also helps her students to meet someone like Netzley, who wears hearing aids.

"He tells them they can do anything," even with a disability, Ayala says. Netzley reinforces that point by playing a tune on a wooden American Indian flute he carved himself.

Edison Bethune Charter Academy's purpose is to help low-achieving students bring up their test scores, Ayala says, and so far, scores in math have improved.

At the end of the visit, Netzley helps Ayala hand out certificates to several of the students for good spelling grades, as his employees applaud.

When they leave, they get hugs from the students.

"Giving back to the community is really the important



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Edison Bethune second-graders get a treat from dentist William Netzley, right, as he plays a tune on a flute.

part of anybody's life," Netzley says.

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