Students at Roosevelt Elementary School recently got a chance to learn math and science hands-on as part of a new pilot program.

The Math and Science Challenge (MaSC) is based on a curriculum set by educators at the Lawrence Hall of Science in Berkeley.

Nearly 50 students in second through fifth grades have been hand-selected by their teachers for the free program.

The after-school classes are an opportunity for kids who are doing well in math and science and have skills that are above their grade level, so they might welcome a challenge and an opportunity to work on hands-on experiments.

Activities included using cabbage juice to study pH levels, mixing chemicals to form slimy concoctions, testing water from various sources and leaning about solar energy for the science classes.

The math classes decoded secret messages, rolled various sizes of balls across a court to study geometry, and learned about ratios and proportions by using tall buildings to measure things.

Next year, there are plans to double enrollment in the MaSC program and also to expand to other school in the San Leandro school district. They hope to add one new school a year until all of the city's elementary schools have a MaSC program.

The program is free and subsidized by donations, with many large companies matching individual donations. Anyone who wishes to contribute can send a check payable to the San Leandro Education Foundation (SLED) with “MaSC” on the memo line. Donations can be dropped off at the Roosevelt Elementary School office at 951 Dowling Boulevard or mailed to the MaSC Program, 645 Bancroft Avenue, San Leandro, CA 94577.

CAPTION: Students in second through fifth grade at Roosevelt Elementary school have been able to study science and math with hands-on experiments as part of the Math and Science Challenge after-school program.

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