

Trackmaster Report: Medfield Heights Elementary School, April 19-21, 2017

Members Dave Sealing, Mike Fistere, Ron Tucker, Bill Knapp.
These members all contributed mightily to making the event a success.

Day One, April 19.

All members were present at the school upon the arrival of the trailer at 7:30. Unloading was without difficulty and layout was complete with green light and trains running at 10 AM. Layout was 2 modules x 3 modules, including geezer gate. Overall size 16 x 20 feet.

DCIS, TMCC, and Lion Chief all functioned properly. Wi fi was not tested.

First students arrived at 11:10. Sessions were 45 minutes. First session was 5th graders. These students were each allowed to run a Lion Chief train once around the layout until all students had the opportunity. Voltage was set at 14 v. to prevent high speed runaways. To say the students enjoyed the opportunity was an understatement. No trains (or students) were injured during the proceedings. Ron Tucker and Bill Hakkarinen had this equipment and supervised them.

Subsequent sections were pre-K and kindergarten. These younger students were not given the opportunity to run the trains.

Trackers took the last 10-15 minutes of each session to discuss various issues. Ron Tucker discussed railroad safety. Bill Knapp discussed electrical circuits. Mike Fistere demonstrated whistle signals. All members answered questions from every group.

A midday surprise was the principal, Mrs. Amber Kilcoyne, arriving with two pizzas for lunch.

There were no derailments or collisions. One push-button on a module came loose and was repaired promptly by Bill Knapp. TIU required re-set once.

Several videos have been posted to the Tracker Facebook page, and a report entered on O-Gauge Railroading.

The school also posted on its Facebook page, and the event has been re-distributed by the Baltimore City Schools. There may be a visit from the Media group tomorrow or Friday.

Operation Lifesaver presenters, from Amtrak, will be present all day Thursday to handle the safety sessions.

The event is open to the community on Thursday from 11 AM to 1 PM. Several pre-school groups are expected to attend as well as home-schooled students.

Each class also experienced a period of night running, with the room lights out. These generated intense excitement, as can be seen on the Facebook videos.

The last session left at 2:15, with school closing at 2:30.

Trackers returned home to relax and recoup for the morrow. First session is at 8 AM.

Day 2, April 20

It was a rainy morning on Thursday, April 20, when Trackers began arriving after 7 AM for the second day of the Medfield Show.

Classes began at 8:05.

Ron Tucker had prepared steam locomotive and diesel locomotive diagrams on one set of chalkboards. On the other set, Bill Knapp had a very well-done display of how the Tracker layout operates, which part uses DC, which AC, and an excellent overview of the remote operation. Both members excelled at presenting to various class age groups between Grades 1 to 5. Several times “AH HAH!” moments were noted in the students.

By midday the sun was out. Good thing, too. An unexpected fire-drill was held. Trackers had to exit single file behind the pre-K group. The Trackmaster had difficulty keeping some of the members quiet and in a straight line. Photos of the event are on the Tracker Facebook page.

Students between grades 1 and 5 again were given hands-on operation.

Today there were two crashes and two derailments, not caused by students but by the usual culprit: “operator inattention.” No trains were damaged, however.

One youngster did suffer a small scrape on the forearm from a plastic edge. It was handled by the teacher with a band-aid, who advised the Trackmaster that no incident or other reports were necessary. It was a sharp corner of a club corner piece. We may wish to look carefully and see if any edges need smoothing.

Mike F. had graciously left his illuminated aquarium car train for use. It proved very popular with children especially when the lights were turned out. It was pulled by various Lion Chief locomotives including Dave Sealing's “Frosty Express” and was always kept as the sole occupant of the middle track.

The room was not suitable for Operation Lifesaver, but the principal re-accomodated them in the library, and re-scheduled classes to attend each area. They expressed great satisfaction with the overall event.

Visiting student, Jeremy Jones, son of a second grade teacher, was incredible helpful. He willingly and readily assisted in supervising younger students in train operation. Jeremy

is now in high school, but his mother arranged for him to spend the day at Medfield, given his avid interest in trains. His mother will be given a brochure and other recruitment information when her class visits on Friday. Many teachers recognized and welcomed Jeremy from his time at Medfield.

Newest member Stephanie Smith was represented by her husband Ralph and son Hunter, who visited during the public hours 11-1. Hunter was able to run his brand-new Lion Chief Plus GP-20 in BNSF colors. Ralph also helped in general layout activities. Their presence and efforts added greatly to the operations.

Today's scheduled finished a bit early, with the last class visiting at 12:45. A few late-coming members of the public were also accommodated, but Trackers were on their way home by about 2 PM.

Ron Tucker, Bill Knapp, and Dave Sealing all participated today.

Photos of today's events have been added to the Tracker Web site and Facebook page.

The Trackmaster should note that his daughter, granddaughter, and grandson (1st grade) all visited today. Granddaughter Suvi (3 1/2) did not seem all that interested in Lion Chief. After all, she runs Legacy at Grandpa's house.

Day 3, April 21

"That was one of the most fun shows I've ever done."

That comment was NOT made by the Trackmaster, but it could well have been.

Once again Ron Tucker was the earliest arrival, well before the first class visit at 8:05. He had all in order, with some help from youngsters who came in early with their teacher-Moms.

Visits today were from second graders and one fourth grade class. All students got to operate a train at least once around the layout. Trackers noted that the children were so happy, that they took their locomotives off and three Lion Chief locomotives were running simultaneously, one on each track. Thanks to Ron Tucker for also allowing the students to run his equipment. Between myself and Ron, we had six Lion Chief locomotives.

Trackers now had the discussion parts down. Mike F. did Railroad safety and train whistles. The "Bill's" did the electrical operation of layout and remotes, and Ron T. did explanations of steam and diesel locomotives. Only Bill K. has a current teaching certificate. It was evident.

The fourth graders showed some interesting initiative. While running an Amtrak passenger train, several spontaneously decided to form a “real” train, with student passengers lining up behind the engineer as the train circled the layout. The engineer would then move back to become a passenger as the next student took over the Lion Chief remote.

Mike F. made a sandwich run to Subway during a late-morning break before the last class at noon.

During the break Ron and Bill K. used DCS wi-fi, which again functioned well.

Break down was underway by 1:00 PM, and proceeded smoothly. Most of the layout was down by the time Dave S. arrived before 2. All was complete and the trailer loaded by 2:30.

Problems:

- 1, Dave S. noted a broken wire on the trailer harness, will need replacement.
2. Student scraped arm on plastics, see Day 2 report. Trackmaster at next show may want to have sandpaper along to check edges and smooth if necessary.
3. Lack of skirting: decision made not to use because of 31” legs. Perhaps could be revisited with folding skirts under.

Principal Kilcoyne and staff were unanimous in their pleasure with the event. Mrs. Kilcoyne noted that she’d be “telling some of my principal friends with good schools about you.”

General Comments: NCT now had done two elementary schools in the last two years. While demanding, there is tremendous satisfaction in seeing such obvious excitement and enjoyment of the layouts. The Trackmaster looks forward to further discussion of possible future events.

Note must be made of the outstanding work of Dave Sealing, Mike Fistere, Bill Knapp, and Ron Tucker. The “Men Who Made Medfield.”

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Hakkarinen
Trackmaster