

November 13, 2006
Avon Middle School Science and Math Students Benefiting
from the Avon Education Foundation

Students of Avon Middle School are receiving the newest, most advanced science and math instruction in the school's history, thanks to a grant provided by both the Avon Education Foundation and the Avon Middle School Parent Teacher Organization. Principal Marco Famiglietti couldn't be more excited about the new opportunities that the Research in Real Time (RIRT) grant has provided for AMS students: "The RIRT grant has put authentic, scientific tools such as laptops, graphing calculators, and electronic probeware into the hands of our students. Students and their teachers are now able to explore mathematical and scientific concepts with equipment that can be found in professional labs. As a result, students approach their learning with greater enthusiasm and are able to perform higher-level thinking tasks."

The specific materials that the grant purchased were:

- Eight sets of various probes: force, motion, and temperature.
- Two sets of the "Hydromania" kit which includes turbidity, ph, DO water flow, and conductivity.
- Three state-of-the-art Dataloggers GLX.
- Nine Data Explorers
- Nine laptop computers, a storage cart, and a wireless access point.
- Thirty Ti-84+ Graphing Calculators with view screen connections.

Kelly Lanahan, the Middle School Computer Media-Technology Assistant, co-wrote the grant proposal with the science and math departments. Lanahan is thrilled about what she already seeing as "inquiry-based learning" taking place all over the school: "This type of technology is helping to reach all types of learners; students who may have had trouble with science before, are enjoying the hands-on approach to learning that this equipment provides."

Eight grade science teacher, Christopher Jones couldn't agree more: "Every teacher has a student who refused to fully apply himself. Teachers continually struggle to try and reach these students and guide them towards their potential. During our unit in motion, a boy who typically takes a "back seat" in class, volunteered to demonstrate to his peers how to get the steepest possible line on a distance time graph. He took a piece of poster board and held it in front of the new motion detector. He simply said "tell me when to go." I said "go" and he calmly dropped the poster so it would fall from view from the motion detector. He caused the motion detector to go from measuring an item that was one meter in front of it, to instantly measuring the wall, four meters away. A *very* steep line was produced as a result. There is no way that I will ever know, but it could be that using this powerful teaching tool provided by the grant helped me "reach" this student."

Science and Math teachers are collaborating on how to integrate the new equipment into both curriculums. Scott Rand, another 8th grade science teacher is enthusiastic about the discussions that this equipment is generating between the faculty: “As a department, we talk about everything we are doing with the new equipment, and how we are applying them. As a result, we are consistently receiving new ideas of how to best utilize the probe ware.”

The teachers at Avon Middle School, who co-wrote the grant proposal with Kelly Lanahan, dedicate a lot of their own time to in-service workshops that teach them how to use all aspects of the equipment, and they are still learning. Avon Middle School students are now exposed to the type of technology that will allow them to compete in the ever-growing world of technology they are entering.

The Avon Education Foundation is a volunteer organization that raises money to provide grants such as the RIRT to enhance the education of all Avon students.