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Posted on Mon, Sep. 15, 2003

## Fayette nets \$1.12 million school grant

Science award promotes Web-based learning

By Michaela Saunders  
HERALD-LEADER STAFF WRITER

A unique million-dollar grant will let Fayette County students solve and develop math, science, engineering and technology problems for other schools to use on their computers.

The Fayette district was awarded one of 13 grants given nationally by the National Science Foundation and the only award to create Web-based lessons that teach problem-solving through real-life incidents workers confront in science and math occupations. The \$1.12 million will be spread over the next three years.

Students at eight schools will partner with local businesses, the University of Kentucky and the University of California-Los Angeles. Fayette students will learn while they create, officials said.

"We're going to develop problem sets based on real-life problems in business and industry," said Greg Drake, the district's coordinator of instructional technology. "For example, we will work with the College of Pharmacy to study drug interaction. Students will be given data from whatever sources and have to determine the possibility for drug

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interaction."

Students will complete and add to lessons on the Interactive Multimedia Exercises, or IMMEX, system developed by Ron Stevens at UCLA. Stevens originally created the software for medical student instruction.

"I got tired of giving multiple-choice exams to test diagnostic skills," said Stevens, director of the IMMEX lab and professor of microbiology and education.

The curriculum, which tracks how youths solve problems, was modified for kindergarten through 12th-grade students in the mid 1990s. There are currently almost 60 lessons.

During the first year of the grant, beginning Oct. 1, Fayette County teachers and students will use existing problems to become familiar with the system, Drake said. Six middle schools and two high schools are voluntarily participating and are in the process of selecting teachers to serve as liaisons. Each teacher will participate in training next summer. Beginning in fall 2004, students will develop lessons.

The material will be sent to UCLA and added to the IMMEX system Web site for use by other schools across the nation. Because of the national accessibility of the curriculum, it will be developed with Kentucky and national education standards in mind.

IMMEX problems show "science is something that's important, and you can bring it to life in the classroom," said Joycelin Palacio-Cayetano, director of instructional technology outreach at UCLA's IMMEX lab.

Fayette County businesses, including architectural design software developer ArchVision, have been recruited to participate in the program.

"Most of the learning now is still very abstract," said Randall Stevens, ArchVision president and founder. "That's where things like the visual



components and seeing results makes it easier. When you can tie it together, it makes things much more interesting to kids as they're learning different disciplines."

The district's grant proposal had a lot of competition, said Daniel Householder, program manager with the National Science Foundation.

"We were overwhelmed by the number of proposals," he said. "Your community can be very proud of its school system."



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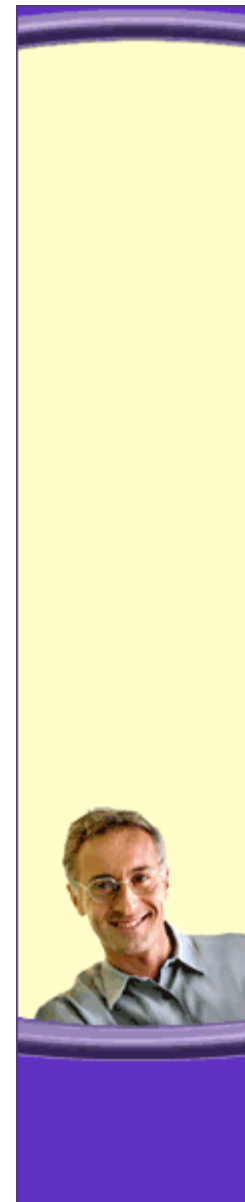
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