

School News & Notes

Budding Young Scientists Use Mobile Discovery Tools To Turn Their World Into a Classroom

(NAPS)—Given a mobile computer and tools for scientific discovery, students are propelled by their own natural curiosity into a boundless “classroom” for inquiring minds, according to Wayne Grant, Ph.D., an authority on inquiry-based learning and founder of ImagiWorks, which six years ago introduced schools to ImagiProbe.

ImagiProbe, a mobile data acquisition system, connects to Palm Powered handhelds and engages students at a very personal level by enabling them to ask their own questions, decide what data to collect, see the data visually, get immediate results and draw conclusions.

Ultimately, according to the former research scientist, curriculum designer, teacher, “it provides them with a deeper learning experience—one that’s based on analysis, reflection and the joy of discovery.”

According to “What America Thinks About Science Education Reform,” a recent study from the Bayer Corporation, science is being “squeezed out of the school day.” As an antidote, Grant prescribes mobile inquiry-based science to spark students’ interest, especially in elementary and middle schools where there is little or no access to science labs.

Take Northline Elementary School in Houston, Texas, where fourth grade students used ImagiProbe to study the “reasons for the seasons.” The project “turned these kids into bona fide scientists right before my eyes,”



EUREKA—Discovery science tools for students propel their natural curiosity.

said science teacher John Schaff.

In one investigation, students discovered patterns in ground temperature by measuring the temperature of the soil in the school garden. In another, they used temperature and light probes to measure differences when a light/heat source was placed at angles that mimicked the angle of the sun in various seasons. Together they uncovered relationships that linked heating and cooling patterns in the world around them to seasons.

Such experiments in elementary school were practically unheard of a few years ago. Today, Grant, now a vice president at PASCO scientific, which acquired ImagiWorks, is on a mission to move educators from rote learning and “cookbook” science to inquiry learning using authentic approaches that emulate the way real scientific research is done. It’s a stance shared by the National Science Teachers Association.