

Banner - News

2004 Arkansas Press Association General Excellence Award Winner for Small Daily

8 Pages

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Emerson teachers learning about research in the field

By JEN BRADY
Staff Writer

The teachers have become students again.

This week has been a learning experience for teachers from Emerson who have been participating in a model classroom. Research-based instructional strategies are used to apply focus to students in all areas and all needs of learning.

Tamara McCulloch, instructional director of the Centers for Quality Teaching and Learning, said the teachers are using different tools — including some technology — to see how they can meet their curriculum frameworks.

"Research tells us that the brain has to make connections to prior knowledge, prior experiences to help facilitate learning," McCulloch said.

The Emerson teachers have spent the week connecting to a theme based on the curriculum.

On Monday, they connected to themselves as teachers and how they learn.

Tuesday, the teachers connected to each other by working together and experiencing learning with other people.

They connected with the environment on Wednesday



nected to each other by working together and experiencing learning with other people.

They connected with the environment on Wednesday by taking pictures and creating an electronic storybook about the survival of a creature, such as a black widow spider or a bumblebee.

On Thursday, they connected with the community by looking for learning opportunities within their local region.

And today, the teachers will be developing a web site based on their community that can be used for student learning.

The goal of taking teachers through the experience is to help them apply teaching strategies to address deficiencies that may be found in Emerson's Arkansas School Improvement Plan, McCulloch said. "The good thing is that it covers the concepts you're trying to teach not just the curriculum. It's not how to teach geography better, it's how to teach children better."

She added that the teachers will be able to take the strategies they've learned and apply them to any content area.

"The goal at school is to



Photo by Jen Brady

Emerson Elementary/Middle School principal Regina Jean takes a measurement at the Cecil Traylor Wilson Memorial Garden while 6th grade teachers Nelda Pharr takes notes and Amy Alexis holds the measuring tape end. The three were participating in a professional development workshop where they were "connecting with their community" on Thursday.

reach all learners and I think the teachers will take home a lot of great ideas to be able to use in their classrooms," Emerson Elementary/Middle School principal Regina Jean said. "My idea is to be able to go back and to watch them use these strategies."

McCulloch said that this

was a great group of teachers to work with because it's asking a lot of teachers to take time during their summer for professional development workshops.

"They have committed their time and I think that speaks volumes of teachers who commit their own personal

summer time," McCulloch said.

The Centers for Quality Teaching and Learning was started in North Carolina to help provide schools with professional development opportunities to meet the No Child Left Behind requirements.