



MathScience Innovation Center

Imagine. Create. Lead.

Contact: Robin Newton
Tel. (804) 343-6525 Ext 227
Email: newton@msinnovation.info

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 27, 2009

MSiC STAFF BEGINS IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW *PICO*CRICKET PROGRAMS

No, they are not small crickets. However, just like real crickets they communicate, move and make sounds. Developed by MIT and the LEGO Company, this newest LEGO product integrates the arts, sciences, math, technology, and engineering. Because of its greater emphasis on artistic expression, the product effectively appeals to science “lovers” as well as to science “phobics”.

Beginning in the summer, the MathScience Innovation Center will incorporate *PicoCrickets* into new programs for teachers and students. While LEGO programmable bricks focus on robots, the newer “crickets” focus on designing, building, programming and decorating devices. Once programmed, these tiny devices can make things spin, light up and play music.

Teachers and students will also learn *Scratch*, a programming language which makes it easy to create interactive stories, music and games and to share them on the web. To program successfully, students must apply mathematics, reasoning, and creative skills. Developed at MIT, *Scratch* is available free on the web.

In late February, ten MSiC staffers spent two days creating with *PicoCrickets* and *Scratch*. Consultant Michael Smith-Welch led staff to develop their expertise with these new tools by creating various products that merge new 21st century learning objectives with core *Standards of Learning*. At the June conference for 3-5 educators, staffers will introduce participants to both *Scratch* and *PicoCrickets*. New Saturday and summer student programs will follow as well as a new fourth grade Center lesson in 2010.

Honeywell provided partial funding for the Center's *PicoCricket* initiative.

Members of the MathScience Innovation Center's *Picocricket* team include Laura Blackburn, Crystal Clark, Brian Domroes, Rhonda Hawley, Beth Kappus, Jim Lehman, Cherri Kelleher, Bill Rhyne, Daphne Schmidt, and Gail Warren.

The MathScience Innovation Center is a 42-year-old organization dedicated to futuristic math and science education for K-12 teachers and students. Its vision for 2015 focuses on implementing new programs in fractal geometry, engineering, nanotechnology, environmental modeling, and distance learning. The MathScience Innovation Center is an educational consortium comprised of eight school divisions: Chesterfield, Colonial Heights, Hanover, Henrico, King William, Petersburg, Powhatan, and Richmond. Other divisions also participate through abbreviated memberships: Charles City, Hopewell, Prince George, and the Steward School.