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Illinois educators get a look at 3-D education program

By Robin J. Youngblood, Staff writer

ROCK ISLAND -- They couldn't believe their eyes.

The Illinois School Board was invited Thursday by Thomas Jefferson Elementary principal Rick Loy to "put on the hat of a child" and view Classroom Cubed.

Since this spring, JTM Concepts Inc. of Rock Island and the Rock Island-Milan School District have been garnering support through teachers, laborers and lawmakers for the computerized teaching tool.

The program, which has been further developed through a partnership with Western Illinois University, can transform any lesson plan into three-dimensional images.

Thursday, Rock Island High School science teacher Lori Anderson and JTM demonstrated the program for state school board members. Ms. Anderson presented an abbreviated version of a lesson she gave Monday to sixth-graders at two Rock Island schools.

Board member Dean Clark of Glen Ellyn said he could tell what people thought of the presentation by listening.

"I could hear the oohs and ahhs" of the crowd, he said, adding he was hearing "epiphanies" of people who have long left the sixth grade, but were learning more in 3-D. "The kids involved with this don't realize how lucky they are."

Ms. Anderson said some of the subject matter she taught involves difficult concepts to learn, such as latitude and longitude, but through 3-D the students caught on right away.

State representatives Mike Boland, D-East Moline, and Pat Verschoore, D-Milan, also saw the Classroom Cubed presentation. Rep. Verschoore said it emphasized for him how powerful a teaching tool the program can be.

"This is one of the best things I've seen in years," he said.

Since first seeing JTM's product, Rep. Verschoore said he has worked with the Plumbers and Pipefitters Union to get the program adapted to train laborers.



Photo: Dan Videtich

Henri Oliver, right, a third grade teacher at Whittier Elementary School in Peoria District 150, along with other Illinois teachers, school officials, and education board members watch 3-D projections during a Classroom Cubed presentation by JTM Concepts Inc. at Rock Island High School Thursday morning. Classroom Cubed is a 3-D projection program designed to enhance learning in the classroom.

[More photos from this shoot](#)

Rep. Boland said Classroom Cubed shows the public what Rock Island can do for education, but ``we'll (legislators) have to do our part in providing funding."

The presentation also included results of tests administered to the students Monday to gauge their learning using Classroom Cubed.

In all four classes -- two each at Hawthorne-Irving and Thomas Jefferson elementaries -- took part in the experiment.

At each school, one of the classes learned through a traditional textbook and lecture format, while the other used 3-D presentations and interaction.

Students took identical pre- and post-class tests which Ms. Anderson read to them. The results indicate students taught with 3-D out-performed and learned more in the same amount of time than students taught with textbooks.

The average percentage of correct answers in the pre-class test was 50.3 for the book-and-lecture class at Thomas Jefferson and 42.4 for the 3-D class. At Hawthorne-Irving, the pre-class test average score was 29.6 percent right for traditional and 34.2 percent for 3-D.

At Thomas Jefferson, the traditional class' scores increased by 9.7 percentage points to an average of 60 percent in the post-class test, but the 3-D class increased by 34.8 percentage points to 77.2 percent -- the highest average of the four classes.

Hawthorne-Irving students showed equal improvement in the traditional classroom -- a 9.7 percentage point gain to an average of 49.3 percent. The 3-D class jumped 22.6 percentage points, to an average of 56.8 percent correct.

``We wanted to find a way to connect with all learners," said district assistant superintendent Jay Marino, who presented the findings. ``Technology is a way to do that."

In the near future, more classrooms in the district will be tested to determine the program's reliability and validity, Mr. Marino said.

State school board president Janet Steiner of Carlinville said 3-D learning will be especially effective for the many children who are visual learners.

``It shows lots of promise," she said.

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