

Posted online: April 18, 2005 9:44 PM

Print publication date: April 19, 2005

R.I. schools model problem-solving strategy

By Robin J. Youngblood, ryoungblood@qconline.com

ROCK ISLAND -- Derrick Nephew likes keeping track of his grades so he can see his grades "go up instead of down."

Using data folders is one way students at Frances Willard use Koalaty Kid, a problem-solving method adopted at all Rock Island-Milan **schools**.

About 22 teachers from Moline, East Moline, Rock Island, and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, saw the method at work Monday when they visited Frances Willard, Eugene Field and Earl Hanson elementaries.

Brian Henson, a visiting teacher from Moline's Lincoln-Irving Elementary, said some of the problem-solving methods are used at his school, but not on a full scale. Mr. Henson said Rock Island teachers gave him some new ideas for teaching fifth-grade science.

The teachers were invited to the district by Rock Island teachers Carol Schoening and Cindy Arkebauer, who are proficient in Koalaty Kid.

"The visitors were very complimentary," Ms. Arkebauer said. "They commented that they could tell there is a true infiltration in the district because the students are able to talk the talk. The students really are able to carry out the message of the empowerment of their own learning."

"I like how we keep track of stuff," Derrick, 10, said about his data folder. "Our teacher lets us do it ourselves."

Student ownership keeps students interested in having class meetings, where students give compliments, talk about problems in the classroom and solve them -- all in about 30 minutes once a



Photo: Gary Krambeck

Frances Willard Elementary fifth-grade students, from left, Rayven Morrow and Ka Shauna McCoy talk with teachers Marabeth Robertson and Jessica Hodge teachers from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, as they learn about the schools problem-solving methods used in the Rock Island schools during a visit to the school Monday.

[More photos from this shoot](#)

[J & J Camper Sales](#)

Sales Service & Storage



[VIEW FULL AD](#) +

week.

Many of the visiting teachers took notes as different teachers presented or students talked about how problem solving helps them get better grades.

"The purpose (of Koalaty Kid) is to find the problems so we can fix 'em," said fifth-grader Jerry Westerfield, 10. He and two of his classmates explained the plan-do-study-act Koalaty Kid cycle.

At the junior high level, student-led conferences are a hit and also another part of the problem-solving experience. It gives students ownership and makes them accountable, teachers explained. Student-led conferences began three years ago.

Because of a new format, participation by students and parents at conferences increased by a large amount -- almost doubled -- and grades improved as well, said Edison Junior High teacher Karen Nyman.

"The kids know where they're at 100 percent of the time," said Edison teacher Carol Greathouse.

[Printer-friendly Page](#)



J & J
Camper Sales

1501 IL Rt. 5
East Moline, IL 61244

309-792-2795
www.jjcamper.com



[back to top](#)