

# Dow grants help area schools improve science, math education

By ALAN NIESCHWIETZ | Posted: Friday, February 10, 2012 2:00 am

**FREEPORT** — Science and math programs at a half-dozen local schools got a boost through Dow Gives Education Grants.

Now in its sixth year, the Dow Chemical Co. program doles out roughly \$50,000 annually to help schools better teach science and math in creative and engaging ways.

“We got 23 applications, and six were chosen,” Dow Community Relations Manager Gabrielle Cone said. “They were from all five school districts in central and southern Brazoria County, so they were fairly representative.”

Sweeny Elementary received \$9,426 for electronic equipment, including eight iPads, to implement its Classroom Scientist Inquiries program.

“I’ll take it,” Principal Michael Heinroth said with a laugh, adding it would have been highly unlikely the district could have funded the equipment purchase without the grant.

In this case, the grant will be going to a couple of third- and fourth-grade language arts teachers who add science and math elements to their lessons. Heinroth said it probably was the unique approach that stood out on the grant application.

“I think that was the major selling point of it,” He said. “It’s not just math or science. It’s using those subjects to encourage reading and writing.”

Students still are learning how to operate the equipment they’ll be using, but are excited about the first “C.S.I.” program lessons, which should be in late April or early May, teacher Kelly Schroeder said.

Teacher Celeste Burns said the lesson was inspired by another “C.S.I.”

“They’ll be working in groups to solve a crime using the scientific method,” she said.

Rascoe Middle School in Lake Jackson received a similar amount of money for analytical balances and SPARK Probeware, which are electronic and science lab equipment, Principal Robin Pelton said.

Science teachers are enthused especially about receiving the Probeware, which uses hand-held electronic devices that collect, store and process atmospheric data like temperature, barometric pressure and humidity, Pelton said.

“It would allow them to make use of data in the setting in which it was collected,” she said.

Like Heinroth, Pelton said the grant enables the school to buy equipment it normally could not.

When awarding grants, the selection committee looks for a couple of major aspects of the potential project, Cone said.

“A detailed budget is one of the requirements,” she said, “and one other aspect is that it have a lasting impact, and not just be something like ‘We’re taking our students to a conference,’ and then the \$9,000 is gone forever.”

Other schools awarded grants were:

Angleton Christian School, \$960 for “Engineering is Elementary” books;

Brazosport High School, \$9,936 for TI-84 calculators and a TI Navigator Hub;

Central Elementary in Angleton, \$10,000 for science lab equipment;

Danbury Elementary, \$9,949 for a hands-on educational garden.

*Alan Nieschwietz is a reporter for The Facts. Contact him at 979-237-0151.*