This year our Entergy Team was made up of eight (8) teachers and their classrooms are all in Oswego County. As always, our focus is on math, science, technology (MST) and career aspects of those curricular areas and making these experiences hands-on and “real-world.” Our teachers not only focus on student learning, but on their own professional development as well.

Entergy Corporation has been extremely supportive and collaborative year after year of this project. Several of Entergy’s employees have been active in our classrooms and are very enthusiastic participants! Furthermore, we have received funding for our 8th year of work! Very little of what our team of teachers has accomplished could be done without the generous support from Entergy.

Dr. Marcia Burrell and Dr. Barbara Beyerbach have been a continued source of support and help to me on this project. I thank them many times over and look forward to working with them both in the years to come!

Sincerely,

Sue Witmer

We started our year by all team members looking at what the needs were for the new students in their classrooms. As in the past they asked themselves these questions to start the process: What do these particular students need? What areas of curriculum do they lack knowledge? How would this/these problem(s) best be addressed? What is this particular group of students bringing to the table? The answers to those questions would shape the activities, events, and field trips for their students for the school year. The team also thought about his or her own professional development, as this is an integral part of being a successful classroom teacher.

Over all, the team reports that they feel their students are engaged in real-world, hands on activities. A variety of techniques and technological strategies were used. iPods, “apps”, websites, and new software were used as well as field trips, visiting speakers, and other more traditional classroom activities. They also indicate that they feel they are preparing students for the 21st century through innovative and creative means. Motivation is a key component in all classrooms and by using engaging activities, programs, and many resources, they are seeing improvements in grades and attitudes toward learning.

- Teachers on this project reported that they shared their ideas and that collaborating with others was beneficial towards their own improvement as teachers. They all tied their activities, units, projects, and other learning experiences to the Common Core Standards. There was also a discussion group for an entire 5th grade level in one school.

- A literacy teacher who works with students in grades K-6 introduced i-Pads in one school. She services students who are from low socio-economic groups and some who have disabilities. Apps were purchased that were appropriate to grade level. Most of these children started out by not knowing how to even turn on an I-pad due to lack of this technology in their homes. At the end of the year, 100% of her students could not only turn on the I-pads but had mastered procedures that they needed in order to complete their tasks in order to learn and grow.
Another teacher introduced I-pads in her room as well. She has some computers but most of them do not work most of the time. Using these devices not only assisted her with technological needs in her room but also helped her “engage students during all content areas” and helped “improve my teaching instruction and help all students succeed.”

While using I-pads and integrating other science projects and activities, a teacher found that her students “were motivated to learn and engage.” Some of the quotes from her 3rd grade students include “I can’t wait until Science. Are we doing an experiment?” and “We did so much fun stuff.”

In this same 3rd grade room, “students needing intense intervention decreased from 25% in the fall to 10% in the spring.” This was shown in regards to AIMS Web data. With 6th grade students in Tier 1, there was a positive increase from 38.8% in the fall to 70.5% in the spring.

On the Science Attitude Survey with 3rd graders, there was “a remarkable increase in the attitudes of all student. 94% of student now selected Science as their favorite subject. 98% said they enjoyed doing most of the hands on activities and experiments.”

One teacher wrote that she was teaching her students “more than just how to get an answer, but instead supported the ‘students’ ability to access concepts.’

A 6th grade teacher and a 3rd grade teacher on this project worked together on some units of study. By the end of the year, they said “Over all, students are on task more often, seeking out answers to their own questions by reading more nonfiction books and using the Internet and engaging in conversations about their learning.”

A local middle school music teacher collaborated with a college instructor in her music classes. Students wrote music, produced a record label, and performed original pieces that were recorded on a CD. They learned technical aspects of music in a laboratory setting as well as the “literacy” portion, which involved writing and composing. One of the goals of the program was to “offer students increased chances to engage in the process of musical creation.” Guest speakers and a field trip to SUNY Oswego were integrated in this project and made a great connection to the “real world” as well as to the college community.

This same middle school project included a “CD Release Party” that the students coordinated and ran, as opposed to the year before when the teachers did all of the work for this event. The teacher reports that the first year they only had about 10 people in the audience and this year there were about 70 people in attendance with the students running the event. These students “liked learning about the protocols and being able to create their own songs.” They each got a CD of their work and as the teacher reports, “It’s an experience they will remember forever.”

Most of these teachers attend workshops and/or other training opportunities to further their own learning. One teacher will be attending a workshop called “Technology Integration” in July while another participated in NASA/Georgia Tech ePDN courses. Others will be participating in trainings on the Common Core Standard for the ELA and Literacy.

Children also had the experience of being “publishers” through the use of many websites that can be used with technology such as an Epson projector. This device was installed in a classroom that did not have a Smart Board or any other technology. Over a 12-week period, her
class average in fluency “increased from 62% to 91%.” The students also appeared positive and were heard saying to each other, “Good job!” and “You got it!” Additionally, “all students improved in addition 0-20 fact memory” and there was “an average of 30 point increase per individual.”

- A 5th grade teacher used iPods in his classroom last year and this year. He wanted to measure the impact, if any, on student success. He had three groups and looked at 1) students who used the iPod only, 2) who had teacher instruction and did work with pencil and paper, and 3) who had teacher instruction with the iPod and paper/pencil activity. He found that the “technology group did not beat out the paper/pencil group” and the fact that “the teacher could modify and adjust the lesson or the low to best meet the needs of students within the group” was “something that an iPod cannot do.”

- This same teacher has addressed the new Common Core Standards for speaking writing, and technology by starting a morning announcement program that is “produced by the students.” They type the scripts, do research, and use video recording software – often during their own lunch time! This teacher writes that it has been a “beneficial experience” “for everyone involved” and the students have already made plans for next year!

- A high school physics teacher created a Wiki site. She found that almost 100% of her students used this resource “at least once a week by mid year and they self reported that they felt the pencasts that provided critical homework hints and the linked resources helped them make sense of the challenges concepts.”

- This same teacher did a GIS unit. She found that attendance was up during this activity period “with more than 80% of the class attending each day.” This was up to 90% attendance as the unit work started and their attendance remained “excellent for the remainder of the academic year.

- A common theme in this year’s work was “technology issues.” While this team of teachers strived to bring new, exciting, and motivational technology into their classrooms, several encountered delays within their school technology departments. But, once resolved, they feel that technology is an engaging and motivating factor in their classrooms.

- Regents Physics exams scores will be analyzed after the test is completed in late June 2012.

As in previous years, collaboration between team members, SUNY Oswego faculty and staff, school personnel, other teachers and administrators in the schools is a side benefit to all of these projects. Our teachers are helping our students grow and learn while continuing to grow and learn themselves. They are also sharing their experiences with many others that will start the “ripple” of learning for countless individuals. Ultimately, our children, teachers, and our greater community all benefit from this innovative and collaborative work. Those of us on this project are thrilled to be working with Entergy Corporation in the endeavor to emphasize MST in area classrooms.

Action Reports are on the Project SMART website for all teachers on the Entergy Project. Also visit the links that are posted for further information.