

Science experiments teach kids to think

April 14 2006

A three-year program in Wisconsin's schools is developing new ways to teach science and critical thinking in kindergarten through 12th grade.

The Science Education Partnership Award, funded by a \$250,000 grant from the National Center for Research Resources, developed experiments using organisms such as earthworms, fish and frogs, to teach children about environmental health problems like lead poisoning.

Eighth-graders at Bell Middle School, for example, are learning how minnows poisoned by lead respond more slowly to food. Students like Dale Saari, 13, have gained an understanding as to how lead-poisoned children, growing up in old, poorly maintained houses, might have learning problems in school.

Much like the fish, they are trapped in an environment that is hazardous to their health.

The science program is aimed at minority and underserved populations like the students at Bell Middle School where roughly 70 percent of the children are minority and roughly 80 percent are eligible for subsidized lunch.

There are plans to expand the number of teachers from the current two dozen to 30 this summer and 30 in the summer of 2007.

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Citation: Science experiments teach kids to think (2006, April 14) retrieved 20 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-04-science-kids.html>

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