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Grant, equipment gives class a boost

By John Surratt | Enterprise-Journal

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Math teacher Joyce Deer demonstrates a new wireless collaboration system to senior Ariana Luce. (John Surratt | Enterprise-Journal)

The horizons have broadened for Joyce Deer and her students.

Deer, a math teacher at North Pike High School, recently won a \$20,000 21st Century Classroom grant from Birmingham, Ala.-based InLine Corp., which markets technology-based education equipment.

The grant will provide several pieces of high-tech equipment that Deer will be able to use in her classes.

Dana Rials, education consultant for InLine, said 50 teachers applied for the grant that was awarded during the Mississippi Educational Computing Association meeting in Jackson in mid-February.

Deer's application was the best in the state, Rials said.

In announcing the award, the company said Deer's application included a specific vision for using the technology in the grant package, a passion for improving education and a desire to share the technology with other teachers.

Among the items included in the InLine package are a video conferencing system, a wireless collaboration system with a wireless pad and student response system, a laptop computer and an LCD monitor and projector.

"I'm very excited about the video conferencing system," Deer said, adding that she has arranged

an appointment with a local financial consultant to visit and talk with one of her classes about investing — something that in the future can be done with video conferencing.

Using the video conferencing system, she said, “we can go to a Wall Street stock broker and talk to him live on Wall Street.

“We can also go to other countries and talk with people,” she said. “This allows us to show students the options they have available when they leave school.”

The wireless collaboration system, Deer said, will help her to better teach math in the classroom.

The system consists of a wireless tablet that can access the classroom’s computer system and has hand-held devices called “clickers” that allow students to answer questions from their desks.

“I can project a problem or a concept for the students to answer, and I can tell from their response whether they understand it,” Deer said.

In the past, she had to wait until a test to determine if the students understood a concept. With the collaboration system, she will be able to tell almost immediately if there is a problem.

“If I put up a problem and the majority of the class gives the correct answer, I can tell that they’re getting it,” she said. “If only one or two have the right answer, then I know we need to do more work.”

Working with technology is not new for Deer, who has a master’s degree in instructional technology from the University of Southern Mississippi. She also developed the North Pike School District’s Web site.

“We’re competing against a lot of different things to get the students’ attention,” she said.

“Television, the Internet, iPods and other technology. Using technology (in the classroom) gets their attention. It really piques their interest.”

Deer said North Pike Superintendent Dr. Ben Cox, who was named MECA administrator of the year, has constantly provided the opportunity to make sure North Pike has the equipment and technology it needs for the students.

“He has made sure that no student does without,” she said.

“We’re very proud of Ms. Deer,” Cox said. “She does a very good job, and the extra effort that she put into preparing her grant will help our children.”

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