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Math and Science Come Alive for Middle School Students

McCall Middle School students have enjoyed hands-on learning through the WFEE "Virtual Manipulatives" grant made to a team of science and math teachers for the 2005-2006 school year. The grant monies were used to purchase a site license for the "BrainPop" and teacher license for the "ExploreLearning" websites. These websites were presented at a Faculty Meeting as well as during a one-hour workshop during the district-wide professional development series. Some teachers remarked that they had already been using the sites sporadically under "pseudo-identities" while signing up for trial memberships. Others, having never used the computer during classroom instruction, find themselves working with the sites 2-3 times per week.

"BrainPop" is a nationally recognized site that provides applets (short, educational videos) with supplemental teaching and learning activities. McCall teachers and students have access to this site during the school day and early evening where the applets are used to enhance learning of complex topics in all major content areas – English, Math, Science, Social Studies and Health.

The "ExploreLearning" license has helped teachers make abstract math and science concepts come to life – over 550 McCall students have direct access to this award-winning site. Through "virtual" learning, students are able to manipulate pieces in the program to duplicate the effects of force, mass, mathematical equations and more as they chart the progress on real-time graphs. Teachers can freeze a frame, make notes on the work and then print it out for student distribution. McCall teachers will soon be incorporating the "home" element of the "ExploreLearning" site, which will enable students to use the site at home while doing their homework and teachers to track progress made by each student.

"Virtual Manipulatives" is another example of creative teachers and an innovative foundation coming together to ensure that Winchester's schools remain on the cutting edge of education.

