



Elementary school catches WeatherBug

Weather station installed on roof of St. Stephens Elementary School

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St. Stephens Elementary School students can now access real-time weather data and images from computers in their classrooms, thanks to a new WeatherBug weather station and monitoring system. Alan Rogers (Record Photographer)

Roxanne Collins, convinced the Piedmont chapter of GE to donate \$1,400 to the school for weather equipment.

CONOVER - Fourth-grader Shyheim Huit doesn't have to wonder anymore if he's going to be hot when he comes to St. Stephens Elementary School dressed in jeans and a winter coat. The school recently installed a weather station on its roof, allowing students to know the weather for that day and access predictions for the upcoming week.

Principal Lori Reed said she received information from WeatherBug about applying to turn the school into a weather station. Reed said the state recently shifted the emphasis back to math and science, and a weather station would provide lots of data for students to work with. Reed also thought it would help get students more interested in math and science.

Reed said WeatherBug offers promotional deals every spring to encourage schools to apply. This June, she decided to actually do it. The only hang-up was finding the funding.

GE has always been involved with the school, donating time and funds when the school has needs, Reed said. This time was no different. School secretary Paula Lyford's husband, Bruce, is an electronics engineer and supervisor at GE. Lyford said he is one of the people who, along with Roxanne Collins, convinced the Piedmont chapter of GE to donate \$1,400 to the school for weather equipment.

"I was happy with that. We always wanted a weather station here, so we were going to buy the pieces and build our own, but they convinced corporate GE to back the grant, and they wrote a check for \$14,000," Reed said. "That got us the middle package from WeatherBug, which includes the weather station, the motion camera, a digital display unity, a teacher activity kit and a subscription to the archive (of photos)."

The actual equipment and camera is mounted to the roof from the side of the school, at one end of the building, and takes up only a few feet of space. The camera can be rotated to any angle from computers at the school.

A computer is in sixth-grade teacher Jennifer Jones' room underneath the equipment, to download the data measured by the instruments. The computer has to be in her room because it needs to be within a certain proximity to the instruments.

Although the WeatherBug equipment's only been up and running for two weeks, Jones said students are already excited about it.

"We have a fourth-grader who's become 'the weather girl,' because she's so interested in the weather and saying what tomorrow's forecast is going to be. I think that may be what she ends up doing," Jones said.

And although students haven't gotten into actual lesson plans involved with the weather equipment yet - such as charting changes in temperature and graphing precipitation and wind gusts - they are talking about new weather terms they didn't know before.

"We're learning what all of the different terms are, like dew point. Last week, we talked about the heat index - it was warm enough in December that we actually had a heat index," Jones said.

So far, though, Huit said the most interesting thing about the equipment is not the terminology.

"I like seeing what the weather's going to be before the day comes. I tell the whole class what the weather's going to be," he said, adding he didn't think that would be possible at school.

Jones said the students like to joke with her about the camera.

"They kids say I don't have to go outside, I can stay in and watch them out on the playground. They're such kidders," she said.

WANT TO SEE THE CAMERA?

- Go to www.weatherbug.com
- Enter area zip code in the "change location" box
- Highlight St. Stephens Elementary School
- Press Select station on the map
- Choose weather camera on the left menu

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