

## Ball Charter gets WeatherBug

Students use station to collect, analyze data

By PETE SHERMAN

THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted Oct 15, 2008 @ 12:36 AM

The National Science Foundation has given Springfield Ball Charter School \$15,000 to purchase an advanced weather station that will allow the school to post live weather data and time-lapsed views of the sky on the Internet.

The system, called the WeatherBug, was installed earlier this month. Although some kinks remain to be worked out — last Tuesday, for instance, the WeatherBug detected no rain when it did indeed rain — some teachers are already using the device in the classroom.

"We're using it right now," said Hope Kennell, who teaches third- and fourth-graders at Ball Charter, 2530 E. Ash St. "It's a way to combine technology, math and science, and it's fun for the kids. They just beg for it."

Kennell's class monitors the forecast in Springfield and compares it to another location in the Seattle-Olympia, Wash., area. The students then create charts and graphs to analyze the data. The WeatherBug system allows Ball Charter teachers to download lessons that are tailored to Illinois earning standards.

Mike Nellessen, Ball Charter's technology specialist, said the weather station, attached to two poles fastened to the western wall of the school, includes monitors that measure for rain, wind, humidity, wind chill, dew point and barometric pressure. A time-lapsed camera can be turned 360 degrees. The school has partnered with Decatur-based NBC television affiliate WAND, whose meteorologists can remotely control the camera.

"WAND can move the camera if they see a (storm) front," Nellessen said. "They'll figure out where to point it."

Nellessen said the cost for the station totaled about \$13,270. The remaining money will be used for infrastructure changes required by the WeatherBug installation.

Several schools, airports and news operations in central Illinois use the WeatherBug system, made by WS Convergence Technologies Inc. There are more than 8,000 of the stations across the country.

Nellessen, who applied for the NSF grant last spring, said plans are in the works to incorporate the tool throughout all classes at Ball Charter, which is part of Springfield School District but is controlled by its own school board. Ball Charter also is the only school in the district that includes kindergarten through eighth grade.

### On the Net:

- To see weather reported by the Springfield Ball Charter School WeatherBug, visit [www.aws.com/wx.asp?id=sprsb](http://www.aws.com/wx.asp?id=sprsb).
- To see other WeatherBug locations, visit <http://weather.weatherbug.com/>

Pete Sherman can be reached at 788-1539.