

Students build on core skills

*By Sarah Hardee
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NEWPORT - Geometry students at Newport High School are finally getting an answer to the age-old question that has plagued math teachers for years: "When am I ever going to use this in real life?"

As part of a pilot program through the state's Department of Education and Kentucky Educational Television, 19 students at the school are taking a construction geometry course that integrates the two disciplines.

After learning geometry in the classroom, the students apply it to a construction project. The hope is that students will get more interested in math and retain the information better, according to highly skilled educator Terry Bennett, a consultant with both the Department of Education and KET, who designed the lessons used for the program.

"It's an interdisciplinary video course for students taking both geometry and carpentry courses," Bennett said. "The idea of the program is allowing students to learn math in the context of something they're interested in.

"When you apply math to a field with real-life examples, it makes it more real for students."

Currently, only a handful of schools in Kentucky are part of the pilot program that requires state assessments and evaluations.

More than 30 schools are using program materials, however, and applying the curriculum in math and carpentry classes.

In Northern Kentucky, Newport High School is involved in the program, as well as the C.E. McCormick Area Technology Center in Alexandria.

At Newport, carpentry teacher Harold Davis is teaching the course. As a carpentry teacher who is also certified to teach math, he is in a unique position.

"It's an advantage and made us perfect for this program," said Davis, who is helping the students build a garage at the district's bus lot using geometry and carpentry lessons learned through the program.

"For students, the program is great because it is hands-on learning that has a purpose," he said. "Students are building something by applying what they're learning in the classroom ... it's a win-win for them."

Sophomore Travis Jones said learning geometry through the program has been much easier for him because he's a hands-on learner. It's also been nice to knock out both credits in one course, he said.

"We're putting what we're learning to work," Travis aid. "It's all coming together now and it will be nice to see the finished project."

The construction geometry course is also available through the Kentucky Virtual High School, which offers a range of online learning services for teachers and students throughout the state.

"All of the feedback we've been getting on the program has been nothing but positive," said Bennett. "We're hoping it proves to be a success and we can bring it to even more students in Kentucky."

For more information on the course or to obtain materials, contact Carole Frakes at the Kentucky Department of Education at 502-564-3472.