

# **New Program Raises Student Performance**

## **TAKS scores have jumped exponentially**

Updated: Tuesday, 17 Feb 2009, 9:56 AM CST

Published : Monday, 16 Feb 2009, 9:47 PM CST

Erin Cargile, KXAN News

AUSTIN (KXAN.com) - There is a new level of learning inside the classrooms at Llano Junior High School. Students in Donna Swope's science class barely had enough time to warm their seats, when she handed her eighth graders a sheet of instructions, showed them the meter stick and plastic balls on their desks and divided them into groups. A couple of minutes later the students were conversing about how to measure speed.

"Go!" said one of the students as he started the stopwatch in his hand. Already kneeled down, Colton Dry, 14, rolled a ball on the floor beside two strips of tape measured one meter apart. "That was 0.72 seconds," the timer said. The group penciled it in on their sheet of paper while Mrs. Swope walked around observing.

Once the students were finished, the teacher stepped up to the board and went over the hands-on activity the students just performed.

"You let them explore, figure it out and then you can go back and correct any misconceptions," said teacher Donna Swope.

Swope said that is the key factor in each lesson that comes from the CSCOPE curriculum. Currently, 385 Texas school districts are using the program set up to promote critical thinking and problem solving. Llano ISD is going on their second year using the curriculum. Last year, eighth graders experienced a significant jump in TAKS scores. They went from 77 percent passing to 93 percent.

"In order to make significant changes in how students perform, we knew that we had to change what we were teaching which was the curriculum, and how we were teaching which was the instruction," said Assistant Superintendent Tim Glover.

Even students are noticing a change. "Before I'd sort of get it," said eighth-grader Dry. "I'd have to ask a lot more, but now I'm helping more people than asking."

He said he feels more confident about landing a job in the future in the science field. The curriculum is being used in grades K through 12. The cost of the web-based curriculum depends on the number of students. CSCOPE said it is approximately \$10 per student, plus some additional start-up fees.

A district has to purchase the program for every campus, unless there is a particular school that the Texas Education Agency has labeled "academically unacceptable" based on TAKS performance. Several schools using CSCOPE in the Central Texas area include:

- Hutto ISD
- Hays Consolidated ISD
- Jarrell ISD
- Johnson City ISD
- Blanco ISD
- LaGrange ISD
- Smithville ISD