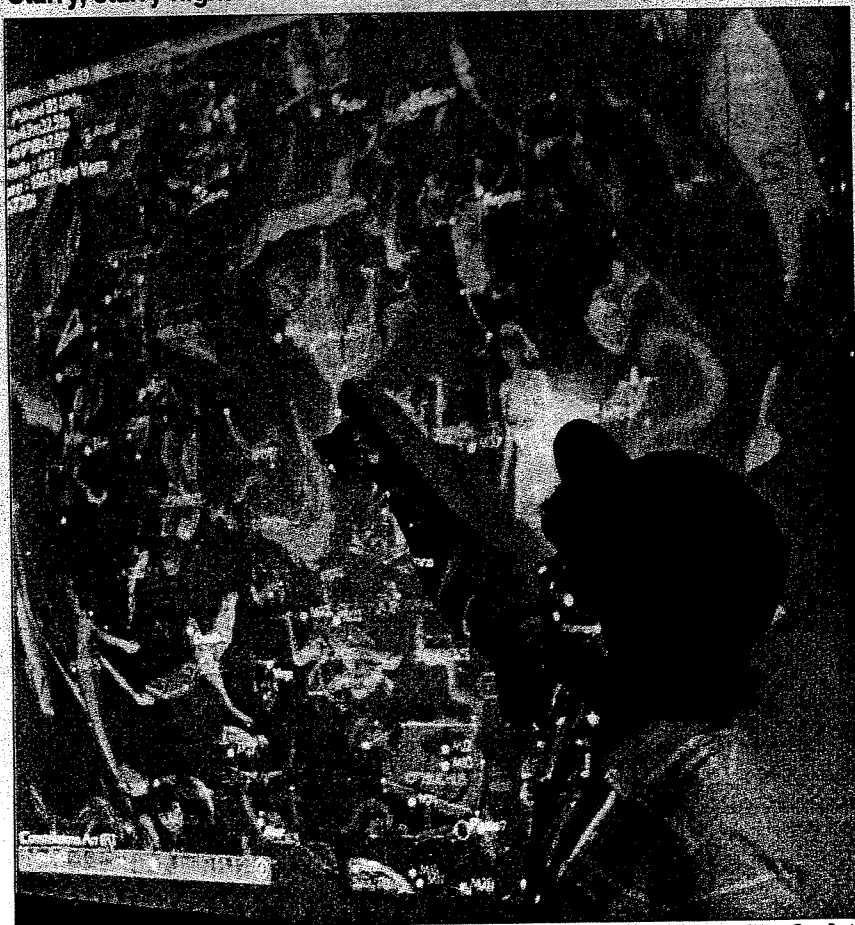


Starry, starry night



Salem High School senior Jacob Fuller points out Ursa Major, the Big Dipper, to Woodbury Middle School students during this week's astronomy lessons. The software program Stellarium showed students the location and shape of constellations.

The night sky's the limit

Salem High School students teach astronomy to Woodbury Middle Schoolers

BY JIM DEVINE

Staff Writer

Some Salem High School students are boldly going where no class has gone before — to teach principles of astronomy to Woodbury School's entire eighth grade.

On Tuesday, Oct. 4, 60 students from Woodbury school met at the high school for the experimental first round of class sessions taught by Salem High School students.

When the state of New Hampshire changed the eighth grade curriculum

standards to include material on Earth and space sciences, Salem High teacher Laura Preston realized there was great potential to have Salem High School astronomy students interact with students at the Woodbury school by taking advantage of the school's own planetarium.

"I feel this is a unique opportunity for Salem High School," Preston said. "Just as the former school district and townspeople were proactive when they installed a planetarium back in the '60s, we're making our own contributions to the astronomers of the future."

In three different workshop sessions, 24 students in Preston's class led research activities for the Woodbury students to learn topics of astronomy.

Using software provided by www.stellarium.org, students presented displays of the night sky before moving on to other activities like creating star finders and seeing descriptions of constellations in the Salem High School planetarium.

Preston said part of this activity has been made possible by a collaboration with UNH. The UNH program called Partnership for

Research Opportunities to Benefit Education allows Missy Smith, a grad student at UNH, to help with the program as an academic "fellow."

"I'm fortunate to have a grad student helping me three days a week," Preston said.

Eighth-grade science teacher Marcia Larason was pleased with the interaction between high school and middle school students.

"Some of the students did really well getting down to the younger students' level," she said.

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ASTRONOMY: Salem High School students teach Woodbury eighth graders about the night sky

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High school students appreciated the chance to experience the other side of the learning experience through teaching.

"It's a lot different," senior Jacob Fuller said. "It's helping us learn, and it's nice to share something we know with the younger kids."

Salem High School Director of Math and Science Deborah Payne said the experience was successful and worthwhile for students of both schools. Three of four more groups from Woodbury school are expected to visit for similar activities in the future.

Preston said the high school

will be hosting a night sky viewing show on Tuesday, Oct. 11, at 6:30 p.m. in Room 147 and all are welcome. The NH Astronomical Society will show a brief slide show with a question-and-answer session before moving outside to the field for viewing. For information, call 560-5985.