

TheCapitalTimes

MADISON DANE COUNTY

METRO

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Today's Talker *Rail idea gets federal money*

More good news for Madison is trickling out of the massive federal spending bill that was passed a week ago.

A \$300,000 grant to study the feasibility of a light rail system linking Madison's south and north sides was among funds approved by Congress in the 2005 omnibus appropriations bill.

Mayor Dave Cieslewicz has proposed a city streetcar system running north-south up the isthmus from Park Street to the airport.

"That's where there is the most potential for economic development," mayoral spokeswoman Melanie Conklin said recently.

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DAVID SANDELL/THE CAPITAL TIMES

Nichols Elementary School third-grade teacher Kym Davick asks a student to explain how he arrived at his answer during a recent class.

Math class divides educators

Everyday Math puts focus on how it works

By Karyn Saemann

Correspondent for The Capital Times

MONONA — Kym Davick is catching her breath. "I'm always tired after math," the Nichols Elementary School teacher quips lightly after an hour of teaching third-graders to add and subtract two-digit numbers.

It's not just fidgety children that bring a weary smile from Davick, it's the curriculum Monona Grove began using last year.

This curriculum — which is used in several school districts in Dane County — is hailed for raising test scores, for its meshing of math with life and for letting children find their own way to solve problems.

It is decried for its use of calculators in kindergarten and its passing nod to the memorization of facts.

The University of Chicago's "Everyday Math" curriculum is one of three elementary math programs endorsed 15 years ago by the National Science Foundation and now used by 2.8 million children.

It is many controversial things but this for certain — it's fast paced.

The last 20 minutes of Davick's class find children practicing subtraction on the blackboard, huddled over workbooks or getting individual help from a teacher.

But the first 40 minutes are a whirlwind, starting with an 8-minute "Basketball Addition" game where small groups of children bend together over desks or sit in circles on the floor.

The drill: roll two or three standard dice, add the results in your head and write the sum in marker on a wipe-away basketball-themed game board.

Confer with classmates on your accuracy, check on your kid-friendly, red and purple calculator if someone challenges your answer and then — here's where old and new math begin to clash — explain how you got it right.

Traditional concepts like carrying and borrowing are still taught in Everyday Math, but as one of a variety of ways to add and subtract multiple-digit numbers, not end-alls.

To add 21, 20 and 17, one child might add the 10s first then the ones, essentially getting 50 then tacking on eight. Or he might move the 1 over to 17, to easily add 18 to the two 20s to get 58.

The class continues. For 30 minutes, Davick projects number sentences on an overhead screen and children write answers on individual wipe-away slates.

Need visual help? Consult the printed number chart on your desktop or the long black and white number chart that starts below zero and climbs into the hundreds as it snakes around three classroom walls.

Think you have the answer? Hold the slate up high. Let the teacher scan the room to see if most children are correct. Then do it again and again — fast, fast, fast — with number sentences then with rounding and estimating.

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DAVID SANDELL/THE CAPITAL TIMES

Nichols student Sawyer Rothrock holds up her dry slate with her answer to the problem.



Nichols student Perla Dominguez practices measuring with a ruler.

School expulsion rate rises

49 kicked out in 2003-2004

By Lee Sensenbrenner

The Capital Times

The Madison school district expelled 49 students in the 2003-2004 school year, the highest number of expulsions in at least a decade, for offenses that ranged from sexual assault to wielding a pencil as a weapon.

The most common offenses were drug-related. According to numbers released by the district today, 13 students were expelled for being involved in a drug deal. Another five were expelled for possessing a drug or controlled substance "with the intent to deliver."

Physical attacks and weapons offenses accounted for most of the remaining expulsions. The district listed seven cases in which a student attacked another student and five cases in which a student attacked a staff member.

The district listed 13 expulsions for possessing a weapon or threatening to use a weapon. These students most often armed themselves with a knife, but one student was listed as having a knife and a hammer. Other weapons included a BB gun, a belt, brass knuckles, a broom handle and a pencil.

One expulsion was due to "a serious sexual assault" and another came from making a bomb threat. Three students were kicked out for repeatedly disobeying school rules.

All these expulsion cases are handled in closed sessions, and the

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Judge halts two coal-fired power plants

By Mike Miller

The Capital Times

Plans by Wisconsin Energy Corp. to build two coal-powered generating plants at Oak Creek have been put on hold.

Dane County Circuit Judge David Flanagan ruled today that the Public Service Commission's approval of the project violated state laws and procedures in several ways. In a 54-page written decision, Flanagan sent the matter back to the commission to begin the approval process anew.

The decision came in a consolidation of cases brought by Clean Wisconsin Inc. and S.C. Johnson and Sons; the Calpine Corp.; and the city of Oak Creek, all of which opposed at least some parts of the commission's order approving the \$2.15 billion project.

Although Flanagan found several portions of the PSC order to have violated various statutes and procedures, at the heart of his ruling is that Wisconsin Energy Corp.'s initial application for the project was not complete.

"The application ... fails to identify at least two alternative locations, fails to include all required regulatory approvals and fails to set forth transmission line agreements," the judge wrote, and said that means the case must go back to the PSC for the

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UW computer team plans for world finals in Shanghai

By Aaron Nathans

The Capital Times

The fearsome computer programming team at the UW-Madison had everything they needed to crush the competition.

Their brains were swimming with math smarts. They were experienced with various computer languages. They were patient and poised in front of a keyboard.

But earlier this semester, they were missing one thing.

"I told them they needed to come up with a name," said their head coach, Dieter van Melkebeek. "The only constraint was whether it would fit in the registration form."

The trio of graduate students Mat-

thew Anderson and Patrick Davidson and undergraduate Alex Frase chose to go the unassuming route. They picked "Harmless Fluffy Bunnies."

"Someone suggested it as an example of what not to call us," Davidson explained.

This band of Bunnies, however, would go on to take first place in the regional contest of the Association for Computing Machinery International Collegiate Programming Competition, held Nov. 13. Their next stop is the world finals in China in April.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison computer programming team is a relatively recent creation. It started four years ago when a graduate

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DAVID SANDELL/THE CAPITAL TIMES

UW-Madison's "Harmless Fluffy Bunnies" have been anything but harmless on the competitive computer programming circuit. They are (from left) Sai Suresh Krishna Kumaran, Matt Anderson, coach Dieter van Melkebeek, Patrick Davidson, assistant coach Scott Diehl and Alex Frase.