



# News Release

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## Partnership brings together area teachers

**Aroostook County** - More than 25 high school and vocational/technical science and mathematics teachers from the southern Aroostook area spent the day at Northern Maine Community College in Presque Isle recently to learn more about the science and math courses offered at the College. The day was made possible through the Southern Aroostook Math Science (SAMS) Partnership between NMCC, Region Two School of Applied Technology, East Grand Junior/Senior High School, Katahdin High School and Southern Aroostook Community School.

While on campus, the secondary school teachers had the opportunity to sit in on several NMCC math and science courses, as well as to meet with the College instructors in those fields to talk about course syllabi and what the instructors' expectations are for students entering their respective classes.

"This was a rare opportunity for us to meet and talk shop," said J.P. Levasseur, a faculty member in NMCC's arts and sciences department. "We all tend to work in isolation, so it is nice to meet and share ideas with each other."

Levasseur, who teaches physics and introductory astronomy, as well as an electrical math course at the College, arranged for some of his physics students to perform experiments for the visiting teachers that demonstrated the types of applied projects on which his students work. In one experiment, students evaluated the efficiency of an air motor by measuring and comparing the output power to the input power. In another, a student displaced heat at a certain rate to determine how much power his heat exchanger had.

In an open dialogue with the visiting teachers about his expectations of incoming students, Levasseur expressed his belief that all high school students should have at least a touch of physics. "They don't necessarily need to know a lot, but they need an underlying exposure to it. They should be familiar with the language and basic unifying principles," he said.

The SAMS partnership is funded through a grant made possible by the Great Schools Partnership, based out of Portland. It is the first year of a three year grant, the overall purpose of which is to support professional development of math and science teachers in the participating schools.

“The main concerns have to do with strengthening the qualifications of math and science teachers, as well as connecting career/technical curriculum to math/science curriculum,” said Craig Kesselheim of Great Schools Partnership, who wrote and administers the grant. “In the trades, you have to know math and often need to know science as well. The trades provide very relevant examples of why a student needs to know something [a concept that was taught in a math or science class].”

According to Kesselheim, the event at NMCC provided an opportunity for teachers in one subject area to talk across institutional boundaries. “For example, all of the teachers taking part in this gathering work with fractions in some way, it’s only a difference in how they teach it and what resources they use to do so,” he explained.

This is true not only of different institutions, but of teachers within the same institution who teach in their respective fields, according to Ken Winiarski, an automotive instructor for Region Two who took part in the day’s activities.

“A lot of what we teach overlaps, whether the student is learning it in math, science or the trades, we just teach it differently. We need to learn how to teach so that it translates better between subjects,” he said. As an example, he points out that the topics of the experiments demonstrated for the group by students in Levasseur’s physics lab are very similar to what he teaches to his automotive students.

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*NMCC instructor J.P. Levasseur, far right, discusses some of the equipment the College’s physics lab with visiting teachers from the southern Aroostook area, including Ken Winiarski (seated) and Fred Sewall (center), both instructors in Region Two’s automotive technology program. NMCC student Ethan Francine of Limestone looks on as he waits to perform an experiment for the group.*