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**Forensics In The Classroom: Court TV Comes To Atlanta Schools**

**By Stacy Andell**

Chemistry and biology students at Atlanta Schools North Atlanta High School put their lab skills into action for a Court TV film crew on April 11. As part of the "Forensics in the Classroom," program, students learned how to collect and analyze evidence of a crime scene. They weren't flying blind. Instead, they had help from a range of criminal investigation experts, beginning with the head of their own science department, Dr. Cadence Spearman. In addition to Dr. Spearman, students interacted with Court TV host Rachelle Savoia, Police Lt. H. Cotton - Tukes, forensic investigators from the Fulton County Police Department, and a criminal science instructor from Bauder College.

The staged crime took place in the school's cafeteria and involved acts of vandalism and a cut gas line. Students worked through the crime scene, learning the proper procedures for collecting evidence. The evidence that they collected, including hair fibers, stomach contents, and blood makeup, was then analyzed in the school lab.

The exercise demonstrated a new standards – based forensics curriculum developed by Court TV, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, and the National Science Teachers Association. The program combines standard high school lab techniques with a mystery solving element.

Students at North Atlanta High School participated in Unit Four of the "Forensics in the Classroom" Curriculum. Called "The Cafeteria Caper," the crime they investigated involved a trashed high school cafeteria that might be linked to an underground club. The lab techniques required for the investigation included an enzyme test and the analysis of hair, blood, and DNA - all within their own school laboratory.

To begin the exercise, students were given handouts that explained the background information of the crime that they would be investigating. They are also given several handouts explaining the nature of forensic investigation and how forensic techniques are used to solve crimes.

Students examine a range of evidence. Some of it comes from the crime scene itself, but students also have access to a mock website that details the practices of the underground club they are investigating. The website provides them with additional information for the physical evidence that they

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collected, helping them to match the evidence with suspects from the website.

The "Forensics in the Classroom" Curriculum provided detailed lab guides for conducting the necessary experiments. After they had reached their conclusions, they were instructed how to fill out Crime Lab Reports documenting their evidence.

The "Cafeteria Caper" addressed five of the national forensics curriculum standards. These included:

- Developing an understanding of the Cell (including enzyme function, organic molecules and indicators)
- Developing an understanding of the Molecular Basis of Heredity (including chromosomes, DNA and genetic inheritance)
- Understanding and performing scientific inquiry
- Analyzing and synthesizing several pieces of data to draw a conclusion
- Developing an understanding of science and technology

The "Forensics in the Classroom" Curriculum consists of five units designed along the same lines as the "Cafeteria Caper." With names such as "It's Magic", "The Celebration", "The Car That Swims", and "Renter's Beware", each unit promises a unique story line and a different set of laboratory techniques to be used.

All five units are available for free from Court TV at

<http://www.courttv.com>

Stacy Andell is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. Stacy has a nose for research and writes stimulating news and views on school issues. For more on Atlanta schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk–12.com/Georgia/Atlanta/index.html>

### **Atlanta Schools' Public Engagement Partnerships**

**By Stacy Andell**

Atlanta Schools' Office of Public Engagement

The Atlanta Schools' Office of Public Engagement is responsible for creating and fostering

partnerships between Atlanta Schools, community volunteers, teachers, parents, national and local corporations, non-profit groups, and civic organizations in order to advance student achievement. The Office of Public Engagement was created as part of the ongoing educational reform that is occurring throughout the Atlanta Schools. The Office's aim is to connect the schools with any resource that could offer a positive influence on the success of the students in the Atlanta Schools. Many of these relationships are of a creative and ground-breaking nature. Several of the most successful partnership programs involve some of the largest corporations in the nation.

### Hewlett Packard's "Bringing it Home" Program

The Atlanta Schools has for many years been part of the Hewlett Packard's "Bringing it Home" program. The Atlanta Schools partnership with Hewlett Packard is part of a larger program that has representatives from Hewlett Packard visiting over 600 schools in the United States, Canada and the Caribbean. The main goal of the Hewlett Packard's "Bringing it Home" Program is to encourage students, their parents and teachers to create and communicate with technology. The Hewlett Packard's "Bringing it Home" Program is an interactive exploratory program that allows students to gain practical experience using digital photography and computers.

Atlanta Schools' Price Middle School was one of the locations where students were exposed to the latest innovations in technology. The Price Middle School's students were able to see how this technology could be applied to their own assignments and projects. The aim at Price Middle School was to help the students by making their work more efficient. The students, principal and teachers at Price Middle School all profited from Atlanta Schools' participation in the Hewlett Packard's "Bringing it Home" Program.

### Atlanta Schools' Long Term Partnership with General Electric

Atlanta Schools has been in a partnership with General Electric Energy since 1993 and will continue this partnership in the future. The partnership with General Electric involves several different ongoing projects and was originally started by former Atlanta Schools' graduates who now are employed by General Electric. The General Electric Partnership was started as a tutoring and mentoring program where General Electric employees would volunteer in schools in the area but it has grown to include Saturday SAT preparation, the Family Technology Resource Center, and scholarship programs. There are now more than 1,500 General Electric employees involved in the General Electric Partnership in some way. The General Electric Partnership has proved to be very influential in student SAT performance.

In 2002, General Electric donated \$1 million to Atlanta Schools' Southside High School as part of General Electric's national College Bound Grant Program. This donation to Southside High School was the first grant from the College Bound Grant Program to be given to a school in the Atlanta Schools. The grant is being used by Southside High School's "Strategic Design for Student Success" project.

The school wide project plans to double, by 2007, the percentage of Southside High School's graduating seniors who go on to four-year or two-year colleges or universities, or who enroll in technical institutions.

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