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Teaching Minds. Reaching Hearts. One Child at a Time



Taking the fear factor out of math Professor uses music, tricks to make adding, subtracting fun

By NICOLE GERRING
Times Herald

LAKEPORT - At a presentation at St. Edward's-On-The-Lake Catholic School on Thursday morning, William Hart used a trumpet, an egg carton and a World Book Encyclopedia to teach about mathematics.

His unorthodox approach and jokes set at ease his audience of third-, fourth- and fifth-graders, who enjoyed learning math tricks and patterns from the mathematics professor who teaches at Macomb Community College.

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"Why was six nervous? Because seven eight nine," Hart said, pointing to an overhead transparency that read "789," a number used in an addition and subtraction trick.

In his "Math with Hart" presentation, the professor used fun tricks and unusual props to teach concepts such as probability, surface area, volume, perimeter and ratios.

Hart, who once toured with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra, played the trumpet and asked the students to count the number of combinations made by the keys in an up or down position, teaching the concept of factorials.

He also used tricks to make tasks such as multiplication by 11, division and other common assignments easier and more fun.

Diana Decker, a fourth-grade teacher at the school, said some students are easily intimidated by math. Finding ways to make it fun can speed up their learning, she said.

Learning how to problem solve, which Hart stressed in his presentation, is a

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Times Herald photos by MARK R. RUMMEL

SOAKING IT UP: Emily Smith, Miranda Coombs and Nathan Hart watch intently Thursday as Professor William Hart, a mathematics instructor from Macomb Community College, shows how math can be fun at St. Edward's-On-The-Lake School in Lakeport.

ONLINE

WILLIAM HART

- Check out Hart's Web site at www.mathwithhart.com.

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skill applicable in many areas of school and life, Decker said.

"They can do that in a lot more things than just math," she said.

Virginia Hether, a fifth-grade student, said she would show some of the addition tricks to her mom and grandma.

"(My mom) will be stumped," she said. "Especially my grandma."

Hart, who performs for school groups throughout the Metro Detroit area, said he loves making math entertaining for kids.

"I'm trying to get youngsters to see the fun side of mathematical thinking," he said. "A lot of my students who struggle with math don't have good memories of learning it. I make it playful, but I also tell them it can be difficult."

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ON A MISSION: Macomb Community College mathematics Professor William Hart plays music for students and explains how math and music are similar Thursday at St. Edward's-On-The-Lake School in Lakeport. Hart, who said many of his college students don't have a lot of good memories about learning math, has made it his mission to change the way kids think about the subject.

STORYCHAT 

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