

# Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs News

## Wisconsin Air Guard helps Milwaukee youth get excited about education

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By Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue

Wisconsin National Guard

The Wisconsin Air National Guard is helping Milwaukee students soar to new heights as part of a Department of Defense-sponsored program dubbed [STARBASE](#) - which aims at improving students skills and experience in science, technology, engineering and math.

STARBASE Wisconsin, which serves Milwaukee's public and nonpublic schools, joins more than 30 states working to inspire and motivate students for careers in engineering and other science-related fields of study.

"Fifth grade is the first vulnerable point, from all the statistics, where children decide if they want to stay in school," said Col. John Puttre, STARBASE Wisconsin program manager. "It's just a fantastic opportunity for students to get excited about learning."

Students are taught through "hand-on, minds-on" training in a variety of topics - physics and chemistry, technology and engineering, and mathematics operation and applications. Throughout the 5-day program, the students learn core objectives through experiments, practical exercises and knowledge based learning that is aimed at being fun and educational.

One student summed it up when she said, "That's the hardest class I've ever taken, but I loved it."

In its first round of classes, the STARBASE Wisconsin program graduated more than 60 5th grade students from three Milwaukee schools - St. Marcus Lutheran School, Emmaus Lutheran School and Washington DuBois Christian Leadership Academy. The second group of classes includes students from Milwaukee's public school system.

Puttre has been working with other Wisconsin Guard leaders for more than a year to get the program up and running. He was more than pleased to speak to the first

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Noel Williams, a 5th Grade student at Milwaukee's St. Marcus Lutheran School, takes a short quiz April 30 to test his knowledge in science and math prior to graduating from the Wisconsin Air National Guard's first STARBASE program. Williams was among the first Wisconsin class to graduate from the program which aims to expand the knowledge and interests of 5th grade students in science, technology, engineering and math. *Wisconsin National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue*



Col. John Puttre, who led an initiative to bring the STARBASE program to Wisconsin, speaks to 5th-grade students of the St. Marcus Lutheran School during a graduation ceremony April 30. STARBASE

graduating class.

"Whatever it is you want to do in life - you know, after this, you can do it," he said. "You just have to put in a little effort and take small steps, and you can make or build whatever you want ... even your dreams."

The STARBASE Wisconsin staff is comprised of a director, two instructors and an administrative assistant, all of which are federally funded state employees or contract personnel. The program's director, Dr. Charisse Sekyi feels the sky is the limit for STARBASE Wisconsin students.

"We are so proud of the work that you have done while you are here. Looking at your faces while you worked in your teams and did experiments made all the hard work that it took to get this program up and running worthwhile," she said.

A recent evaluation study found that STARBASE students were exposed to sophisticated technology and through their exposure to the program helped them to greater understand the application of physics, computers and mathematics. These tangible metrics were also found to enhance the students' self-esteem and confidence, as well as their attitudes toward science and math, according to the study.

"That whole problem solving process ... is really pretty cool and we use it all the time," said Brig. Gen. John McCoy, commander of the Wisconsin Air National Guard, to the first graduating class. "So we want to make sure that you get through this program and maintain an interest in all of those things related to science, engineering and math."

The Wisconsin Air National Guard is currently in the process of hiring two additional instructors which would double the number of participants each year from 750 to 1,500 5th graders.

Wisconsin which aims to expand the knowledge and interests of 5th grade students in science, technology, engineering and math. *Wisconsin National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue*



Jermale Euwing, a 5th Grade student at Milwaukee's St. Marcus Lutheran School, works on a project as part of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's STARBASE program April 30. Euwing was among the first Wisconsin class to graduate from the program which aims to expand the knowledge and interests of 5th grade students in science, technology, engineering and math. *Wisconsin National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Jon LaDue*