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## School computers on cancer-cure job

Machines, when not in use by students, work as part of network at U of L

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Thirty computers at Warren Central High School are now part of efforts to cure cancer through Kentucky Dataseam Initiative and the University of Louisville.

The computers, which operate on a wireless grid set up Thursday, run research in the background when students are not using them. While university research is normally done on supercomputers, having thousands of computers "talking" to each other through the same network will allow cancer research to be done that much faster.

"Basically, we run applications from the central machine at U of L that's farmed out to school computers, and it's running all the time in the background," said Dr. John Trent, assistant professor of medicine at the U of L James Graham Brown Cancer Center.

When they are not being used by students, these computers are screening literally millions of cancer molecules to help researchers find drugs for specific cancer targets. As a result, research that would otherwise take decades can be done in a matter of weeks.

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Warren County joins Caldwell, Jefferson, Scott and a few other counties in the Kentucky Dataseam Initiative. As the program expands, officials hope word will spread between school districts, according to Brian Gupton, executive director of Kentucky Dataseam Initiative.

The program began in Caldwell County about a year ago. Warren County's machines conduct the research wirelessly, marking a new level of high-speed technology for cancer research.

"Bowling Green (City Schools) has not joined on yet, but that's not to say they won't," Gupton said.

There is no money exchanged in the program, but the benefits to participating districts are numerous, Gupton said. Technologically, it helps centralize computer systems and allows the schools' infrastructure to run more smoothly and cost-effectively.

"From an educational standpoint, the benefits are huge," Gupton said. "As part of the research, there's a tremendous amount of content being generated. As a result, these disciplines can be offered to students as part of the program."

Researchers will also visit participating schools, including Warren Central, in the future to talk to students about the science that's going on in their computer labs. Hopefully, these talks will encourage students to pursue careers in science that are needed in both the public and private sector of the job market, Gupton said.

"It's important for folks to understand that not only does this educational environment have a talent shortage, but the private sector has a talent shortage, as well," he said. "Science and the core disciplines and information technology are so key to many of the opportunities of the 21st century. If we're going to attract new economy jobs to the state, we have to have a trained workforce that's competent to fill positions."

Kentucky Dataseam Initiative is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing higher education

research. It's picked up national attention for Kentucky because of the unique way in which research is done, and support has come from the Kentucky Department of Education and the Office of Education Technology.

Cancer research is done on the school computers mainly when school is not in session. When students are using the computers, the research is put on hold and the computer's performance for the student is not affected, Trent said.

For cancer research, the partnership between Kentucky Dataseam Initiative and U of L could mean big things.

"We do go visit the schools and make them aware of the research we're doing and what's going on at U of L," Trent said. "We want to give them the idea that there are many different disciplines in cancer research. These days, it takes a team of different disciplines to find new drugs and get them into clinics."

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