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Monday, Sep 13, 2004

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Posted on Tue, Aug. 24, 2004

### JEFFERSON SYSTEM WOULD BE TAPPED WHEN STUDENTS WEREN'T USING IT

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**LOUISVILLE** - Cancer re-search-ers might soon tap into school computers in Louisville to help develop new drugs to fight the disease.

Under the plan, Jefferson County Public Schools would give researchers at the James Graham Brown Cancer Center access to thousands of computers when students weren't using them.

The scientists would harness the school computers to operate collectively as a virtual supercomputer. The combined processing power could cut in half the time it takes to screen millions of molecular combinations for possible cancer-fighting therapies, officials said.

"We can translate basic science into potential drugs much faster," said John Trent, a computational biologist with the cancer center who is part of the project.

The partnership also would bring scientists and professors into classrooms to tell students about the research.

Jefferson County board chairman Joe Hardesty said he knew of no major objections to the agreement.

It's part of a statewide initiative led by Louisville-based company Data-seam, which has worked with universities, schools, research companies and state officials to develop the technology for research, said Brian Gupton, Dataseam's CEO.

Dataseam has identified 12,000 school computers in Kentucky districts that eventually might be available, he said.

Schools were chosen partly because their computers often are underused and many are on controlled networks, he said. The Caldwell and Warren county school districts already are participating.

The school-cancer research project is the first of its kind in Kentucky, Gupton said.

**Updated Monday, Sep 13, 2004**

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The Brown Cancer Center's research -- analyzing millions of molecular combinations as a first step in developing drugs targeting proteins related to tumor growth -- requires crunching vast amounts of data. The findings also could help reduce the side effects of chemo-therapy.

Trent said that's important work because there are few effective anti-cancer drugs available.

Students wouldn't notice any disruption, said Alan Whitworth, director of technology for the Jefferson County public schools.

A network would send data to about 3,400 computers that were turned on but not in use.

The computers would analyze the data and return the results automatically when their applications weren't being used, such as lunch-time, between classes or after school.

"It doesn't sound like much" time, Whitworth said. "But it adds up."

According to the proposed agreement, the district would leave designated computers on 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to be used at night and on breaks.

Whitworth said the added cost of electricity would be "negligible," and worth the benefits to science education and cancer research.



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