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Science Notes - New Hands-On Elementary Science Program

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New Hands-On Elementary Science Program

The National Science Resources Center has introduced the first three units of its new hands-on elementary science program.

"Plant Growth and Development," "Electric Circuits" and "Microworlds" were demonstrated at a March 6 news conference in Washington, DC. The units are part of NSRC's elementary science curriculum project, "Science and Technology for Children" (STC). The project is based on the principle that children learn science by doing science.

The STC program is also based on the progressive development of important science concepts and skills. The program's modular design makes it possible for school districts to incorporate the units into their existing science curriculum. Each unit consists of 16 lessons, and focuses on a topic relevant to life, earth and physical sciences and technology.

Over the next four years, the STC program will produce 24 curriculum units for grades 1-6 (four for each grade). Every unit will be designed to involve children in hands-on science investigations. Together, the units will comprise a complete elementary science curriculum (1-6).

"The STC units are being developed with the assistance of recognized scientists and educators throughout the country," said Doug Lapp, NSRC Executive Director. "With the first three units, we are introducing several key scientific ideas to children, such as seeking evidence, recognizing patterns and cycles, extending the senses and identifying cause and effect."

The materials used in the units are designed to be of high interest to both children and teachers, inexpensive and manageable in the classroom and easily integrated with other subject areas. They also encourage children to work cooperatively in teams to solve problems.

The STC program materials are being published by Carolina Biological Supply Company (Burlington, NC). Three additional STC units will be available this fall with subsequent units to be published every six months.

The National Science Resource Center is a joint activity of the Smithsonian Institution and the National Academy of Sciences. It was established in 1985 to improve the teaching of science in the nation's schools. In addition to the STC curriculum development project, the NSRC conducts annual leadership institutes for educators and scientists and maintains an extensive collection and database of science teaching resources.