

Southwood biotech magnet students receive take-home laptops

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Fredderka Anderson didn't hesitate before firing up her new wireless laptop at Southwood High School in Shreveport on Tuesday morning.

Anderson and 34 other freshmen in Southwood's biotechnology magnet program received the take-home computers to help with homework and research reports. They can keep the laptops if they graduate from the program.

On Tuesday, school officials also celebrated the \$40,000 expansion of the Environmental and Spatial Technology lab. EAST offers a way to learn computer programs through real-world projects like creating Web sites. The Poindexter Foundation and the Community Foundation of Shreveport-Bossier donated money to double the program's capacity.

Southwood's biotech magnet is the most recent addition to the school's math, science and technology curriculum. The magnet aims to prepare students for careers in medicine, research or lab work.

Each group of freshmen entering the program will receive laptops. Capital One Bank, the Committee of One Hundred of Shreveport and Biomedical Research Foundation underwrote the computers.



Southwood High School freshman Fredderka Anderson discusses features on her new take-home laptop computer. Biotechnology magnet students will use the computers for homework and research reports. (Melody Brumble/The Times)

To enroll

Southwood High School will accept biotechnology magnet applications through Friday. The program is limited to 40 incoming freshmen.

Anderson and classmates tested the computers' fun features Tuesday, logging onto Yahoo and exploring other Internet sites.

"You can send music to your phone," she said to a friend. "It's got Bluetooth."

She'll put the computer to more serious use as she grapples with advanced placement biology this semester.

"I'll use it for Internet research and to type papers," Anderson said. "The biology class is really not hard. You just have to stay up late doing homework."

Anderson's mom, Aleta Mahoney, estimated her daughter spends about three hours a night on homework.

"She wants to be a nurse. We felt the science program would be perfect for her," Mahoney said. "I'm very proud of her."

The students will tackle chemistry and microbiology next year. Magnet coordinator Misty Davis is seeking money to equip the microbiology lab with big-ticket items like centrifuges. She and teachers will continue building the program as the first group of students start each new year.

"This year, Bossier Parish Community College loaned us some of the equipment for biology," Davis said. "We're receiving a ton of support from the higher education community."