

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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Teen accused of shooting at LR school bus stop (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

A 15-year-old student has been charged for purportedly shooting a handgun while at a Little Rock school bus stop Friday morning.

Officers responded to a report of shots fired about 8:12 a.m. at 15th and Bishop streets, Little Rock police spokesman Sgt. Cassandra Davis said in a news release.

Davis said police searched the area but found nothing.

A security official at Forest Heights Middle School said he was told by four students arriving at school that a shot had been fired at their bus stop at 15th and Abigail streets, according to Davis.

Officers searched the area and found one 9mm shell casing.

Davis said officers located the suspect walking near the area and found the black, semiautomatic handgun used in the incident at the home of another minor, who was neither charged nor involved in the incident.

The 15-year-old suspect was charged with aggravated assault, four counts of terroristic threatening and possession of a firearm on school property, Davis said. No injuries were reported.

Robotics competition engages young minds (Pine Bluff Commercial)

The world of science became approachable and understandable for some area students through their preparation for and participation in the Central Arkansas Elementary Grades 4-6 Regional Robotic Competition Friday morning.

Held at the Arkansas River Education Service Cooperative, the event brought together 118 students fourth- through sixth-grade students from nine schools within the cooperative's service area of Jefferson, Grant and Arkansas counties.

ARESC science specialist Glenda Jackson said the act of giving younger students the opportunity to create and program their own robots is a potentially transformative event for not just the individual student but for society as a whole.

"This competition is focused on basic robotic movement," Jackson said. "Our kids have never done

this and gotten a robot to do anything. If we have events related to science maybe we can get kids excited about science. It is time for this. Our kids today are tech-savvy. They are surrounded by science.

“The sooner we get this introduced to them the sooner we will have someone come up with a way to get paralyzed people out of their chairs,” Jackson said.

Sheridan Middle School science instructor Heather Dunn brought eight students to the competition.

“Everyone has a gift,” Dunn said. “One of the girls on our team is a great problem-solver. Whenever something didn’t work right when they were working on the robot she would always have a suggestion about how to get it to work correctly. I told her that if she masters that skill she will be able to get a job anywhere.

“The kids have been so into these robots,” Dunn said. “They come in at lunch and after school to work on them. They’re excited about what they are doing. The father of one of my students works at Kohler [a manufacturer of bath and kitchen fixtures] and he told her that his business uses robots all the time. So by working with these robots, the kids are able to relate science to the real world.”

Rose Martin, principal of Coleman Intermediate School in the Watson Chapel School District, said her school fielded 25 students in the competition.

“In order to be on the robotics team our students must have good behavior,” Martin said. “We have been working with the kids since the first part of the school year. You should have seen their reaction when they first put the robot together and saw it move. They called me down the hall to come see it. They were so excited.”

East End Intermediate School science instructor Alan Braden brought 11 students to the competition.

“The new science standards coming from the Arkansas Department of Education are heavily into engineering and technology,” Braden said. “So this type of activity is very beneficial for the students.”

Valerie Penix is a math and science teacher at Coleman Intermediate.

“The kids who participate on the robotics team are responsible for keeping up with their regular school work while they are also doing robotic work,” Penix said. “I have really enjoyed working with them on this. It’s been a good experience.”

The future

Jackson, who will be retiring this year after 41 years in education, said the securing of outside funding was critical to the future of the robotics program.

“We are safe for this year but after that we are going to be in trouble if we can’t find some big donors,” Jackson said. “Once I retire I will have time to go to companies and knock on doors looking for sponsors. It is important to get outside funding for this equipment so that it stays with each teacher that receives it. If it stays with the individual school or district there is no telling what may happen to it but if it goes with that teacher then I know that it will continue to be used.”

Format

The students competed in four events designed to test how well they were able to program and construct their robots to complete four separate tasks.

“They must program the robots to be able to move straight and back up, move at 45-degree angles, pick up a ball and drop it into a container and kick a ball into a target area,” Jackson said.

Students

A team of Coleman fifth-graders was excited to be participating and instructor Mary Ford was proud of the commitment shown by the students.

“They gave up their Tuesday and Thursday lunch periods in order to be on this team,” Ford said. “Most of the teams are made up of whole classes but since I didn’t have a class of my own this team consists of two students from each fifth-grade class. The only time we could meet was during the lunch period. So they really are committed to this.”

The teams was separated into builders, who handled the hardware pieces that went into the construction of the robot, and programmers, who perfected the code used to control the robot. Chandler Cothran enjoyed programming the robot while Khrystina McBryde appreciated the chance to learn about science.

“It has made me more interested in science,” McBryde said.

“I enjoyed learning how to build and to program the robots,” said Briana Collins.

Z’mari Boyce enjoyed the whole experience.

“The funnest part was being able to combine math with science,” Boyce said. “We did some math calculations to program the robot. We started working on the robot at the beginning of October.” Zach Bramley enjoyed building the robot and doing the math required to complete the project. Chris Alverson said he appreciated the challenge of programming the robot to perform tasks including kicking a small ball and following a black line.

Fourth- and fifth-graders from 34th Avenue Elementary School in the Pine Bluff School District took part in the competition under the direction of teacher Valerie Holmes and math coach Claudette White.

“It’s challenging for them and it makes them think,” Holmes said. “It gets them to enjoy subjects like math and science.”

Fifth-grader David Woolfolk II and his sister Miracle Woolfolk split the duties of preparing their robot for competition.

"I'm the builder," Miracle Woolfolk said.

"I do the programming," David Woolfolk II said. "I enjoy science more now."

Fifth-grader Carl Redus III, who was a programmer, enjoyed everything about the project.

Fifth-grader Makiyah Mustilul said it was fun.

"I am a builder," Mustilul said. "We had to take a whole bunch of parts and put them together to create the robot."

Fourth-grader Sessilee Shavers, who was a programmer, agreed that working with robots is fun.

Superintendent talks about student buying syringe from other student (KAIT, Channel 8, Jonesboro)

NEWPORT, AR (KAIT)- An incident occurred Thursday at Newport Elementary School that involved a student buying a syringe from another student at school.

The syringe was handled by at least four students of different grade levels. Larry Bennett, the superintendent of Newport Schools, said disciplinary actions have been taken in this matter. But the parent of the child stuck feels not enough has been done.

"I wish the schools would take better precautions when it comes to issues like this and not just brush it underneath the table," said Jessie Osborne, parent of the student stuck.

Osborne said she got a call from the school saying her son had been stuck by a needle.

"A kid had brought a needle from home to school and in the process of my son trying to get it from them and put the lid back onto it so nobody would get hurt, he got hurt," Osborne said.

She said her physician told her there is no way of knowing if the syringe had been used without it being tested. So she took her child to Little Rock.

"He's been tested for HIV and Hepatitis and in the end, he got put on Hepatitis and HIV prevention medicine and it's making the baby really sick," she said.

Bennett said no other students were hurt and he is asking parents to step in and monitor their kids.

"We're doing everything we can to make sure our schools are safe," Osborne said. "I would ask that parents if you would check backpacks and things like that before you send your child to school."

Bennett said the syringe was passed around to about 4 different students before a teacher saw it and took it away.

"We do try to monitor our students very appropriately and as often as we can," he said

Bennett said the school knows which student brought the syringe from home and disciplinary action has been taken.

"All three have been disciplined by school rules and the last young man who actually stuck himself will also be disciplined for possession of an illegal piece of equipment of paraphernalia," Bennett said.

Osborne disagrees with the school's decision and said her child will never attend another Newport school.

"It's not satisfying me that my child is also going to be disciplined for this." she said. "It could have been something really serious and some kid could have really, truly got hurt."

Bennett said safety is the school's number one priority

"New surveillance cameras are going to be installed over the summer, upgraded equipment and things like that so safety is high on our list," he said.

Bennett said the needle did puncture the student's hand. The student is still recovering from the side effects of the medicine.

Educator nominated for prestigious award (Log Cabin Democrat)

A local resident has been nominated as an outstanding educator, according to a news release. Penny Chen, resident of Conway, was nominated for this year's Vicki Saviers Educator of the Year Award by the eStem Public Charter Schools. She is an educator for eStem High.

Chen is married to Donald Jacob Curran.

The award presentation will occur at the STEM Soiree on May 11.

eStem Public Charter Schools, Inc., is a nonprofit charter school management organization in Arkansas, according to the group's website.

The group has eStem Elementary Public Charter School, eStem Middle Public Charter School, and eStem High Public Charter School in downtown Little Rock. Any school-aged child in Arkansas is eligible to attend the schools tuition free, according to the website.