EUREKA – The Eureka Middle School is the first and only school in Woodford County to affiliate with the Illinois Math and Science Academy gifted program. Thirty sixth through eighth graders who excel in math and science will meet after school on Thursdays to participate in the IMSA Excellence 2000+. Mary Lou Lippscomb of the IMSA outlined the program last week to about 150 students and parents in the school cafeteria.

The program encourages teamwork and there are no grades or homework. “When they finish their education, we’re hoping they’re good problem solvers and are able to communicate effectively,” Lippscomb said. Math teacher Stacy Mooney and science teacher Kadee Bellini helped Lippscomb distribute material about the program. They will receive five days of professional development to run the IMSA program here.

Social studies and language arts will be integrated into the instruction, Lippscomb said. Students will be chosen based on teacher recommendations, academic performance, SAT performance and an essay stating the student’s interest in the program. It will run from Sept. 17 to May 20. The cost of the program is $60 to defray material costs. Scholarships are available. A second section of this local group could be created if there is enough interest.

After a slide presentation on IMSA, Lippscomb, Mooney and Bellini assigned each family a project to complete in about 15 minutes. Each group was given a single sheet of paper, a strip of Scotch tape and a pair of scissors. Their challenge was to erect a paper tower as tall as they could with only the materials provided.

“W e want the kids to understand that it isn’t always a linear progression to find the answer,” Lippscomb said.

Math and science excellence

PAPER TOWERS – About 150 students and parents learned about the Illinois Math and Science Academy coming to Eureka Middle School and were challenged to build a paper tower using limited material.