

PATCHES OF PRAIRIE

By Dr. Valerie Wright,
Environmental Educator/Naturalist,
KPBS

Technology Keeps Kids in Touch with KEEP

Kids on Konza are no doubt the most important element of the Konza Environmental Education Program (KEEP). When students come to Konza, they now more frequently come to do a hands-on science activity. One of the major goals of our program is to teach students about the process and value of science. In order for their experience to be a lasting one, there should be ties to the classroom and the science curriculum.

We have been developing over the past two years just such a connection through the internet. With the impetus of the Schoolyard LTER (Long Term Ecological Research) program funded by NSF (National Science Foundation), and a grant from the Eisenhower Professional Development Program administered by the Kansas Board of Regents, the technical help needed to provide a web site with teacher- and student-friendly information about specific research projects on the tallgrass prairie is now available. The new KEEP web manager (Jincheng Gao) has the first Konza LTER databases and student-generated databases ready for classroom use. The general information about the topics and the methods used by our student researchers are detailed under the heading "Trails to Science Adventures" on the left side of the KEEP homepage. The address for the homepage is www.konza.ksu.edu/keep.

Any teachers (or the public) can use the general portion of the science activities given on the web site. This includes a query page for each LTER database, where questions can be asked of the dataset to help interpret the results. Teachers who bring their classes to

Konza for a science activity have the additional opportunity to have their students input the data they collected on Konza into special databases, which can also be queried and compared to the LTER data taken by Konza researchers. All of these data sets are long term, which means that they span several or many years so that any patterns appearing over time can be sought.

In July 2001 we held the first Teachers' Technology Workshop, which featured interactions among teachers, researchers, education program personnel and technology experts. We all learned a great deal about how the general science information and data should be presented by us and how it could be used in the classroom. For a summary of this workshop, please see the information on our web site.



Researcher Ray Matlack and Teacher Kathleen Jones share ideas at the Teachers' Technology Workshop.