

'Fusion' of math and science comes to Alton

Alton Middle School will partner with the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy during the 2011-2012 school year to participate in the academy's "Fusion" program

The award-winning, after-school enrichment program serves fourth through eighth-grade students who are talented, interested and motivated in mathematics and science

The program works with teachers to strengthen instructional strategies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Students will attend weekly after-school sessions at Alton Middle School. Teachers are supported with curriculum kits and lab materials in conjunction with ongoing

professional development for the delivery of the curriculum units using the Illinois Math Academy pedagogy

To prepare for the delivery of the program, teachers Krista Ginestra and Sarah Tojo will undergo five to six days of professional development. Students are provided with 64 hours of contact in the program, studying two different curricular units in a hands-on, engaging setting

The Fusion program originated at the request of the Illinois General Assembly. It began in the 2000-2001 academic year with seven school sites in Illinois and now has 82 programs in the state. To date it's has served 8,500-plus students

Ginestra graduated from Illinois State

University with a bachelor's degree in environmental science and minors in chemistry and biology. She received her master's in education from

McKendree University. She has taught sixth grade for seven years, and has had six years experience teaching

gifted/honors students

"I am so excited about being chosen to be part of the Fusion program," she said. "I became interested in science at a very young age, and I can't wait to pass some of that learning on to the students."

Tojo will be the math teacher for the Fusion program. She graduated from Eastern Illinois University with a bachelor's degree in elementary education with a concentration in mathematics and an endorsement in

middle school. She has taught seventh and eighth grades in the Alton District for more than five years. She currently

teaches 8th grade math

"I feel this program will be a great opportunity for our students who excel in math and science to develop and use higher level thinking skills. I feel a good understanding in math is so important because math is used in everyday life. I have always loved math, and I am grateful I get to share with my students my passion and knowledge of the subject."

Additional information about the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy Fusion program may be found at www.imsa.edu/programs/fusion

