

Kids try out new equipment simulators

By NIKKI PATRICK

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PITTSBURG —

Pittsburg State University's Kansas Technology Center recently received three new equipment simulators for its School of Construction, and the area kids who were participating in this week's construction camp were the first non-faculty members to get to use them.

The simulators, which are built by Caterpillar and cost about \$100,000, emulate a Caterpillar Cat Hyex excavator, wheeled front end loader and a D6 bulldozer. They were purchased so that students in the construction management program — PSU doesn't train equipment operators — will have some knowledge of the equipment they're likely to see on the job, said Jim Otter, professor and chair of the School of Construction.

"We told Caterpillar that and they said 'That's a novel approach, managers understanding equipment,'" Otter said.

The frame and controls of simulators are exactly as they would be on an actual model, Otter said.

"Some companies make simulators but they're more generic," he said.

The simulators will benefit the KTC in three ways, Otter said. The students who will be future managers and estimators will understand the equipment they're dealing with better and be able to make better decisions; students who will be safety inspectors will better understand how operators and other workers should behave around the equipment; and students in the auto technology department's heavy diesel program will better understand the machinery into which they'll be putting engines.



Bryce Kennebeck, 11, takes a turn operating one of the new CAT simulators Friday afternoon at the Kansas Technology Center. The School of Construction recently purchased the simulators for its construction management program, among others, for about \$100,000. The students on Friday were the first non-faculty members to use them.

The young kids who tested the simulators out during the construction camp seemed to catch on quickly.

“The kids are like sponges,” instructor Jenny O’Dell said of the simulators, which use two control sticks to operate and large, flat screens to simulate a job site. “They’re so good at video games already. They just soak this up.”

The kids enjoyed them, too.

“It felt like it was real,” said 11-year-old Bryce Kennebeck.

The kids also built five dog houses at the camp. At the end on Friday, three of the kids won a dog house. The construction department donated the other two to the Southeast Kansas Humane Society.

Otter said he hopes to build several project manager office simulators within the year. They will be just an office at a job site, and students will have to handle various scenarios. There will be cameras so instructors can evaluate their performances and give them creative criticism later.

“It will show them how to manage in real-time,” Otter said. “We hope by next year to have a series of modules, then add new ones every year.”



The students in the college of construction’s construction camp built five dog houses. Three of them won a dog house in a drawing Friday, and the other two were donated to the Southeast Kansas Humane Society.