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Middlesex Middle School Students Get Some Tech Wizardry: Augmented Reality

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Categories : [Education](#)

Tagged as : [Augmented Reality](#), [Darien Public Schools 2017-2018](#), [Darien Public Schools News of the Week 2017-2018](#), [Darien Public Schools Newsletter 2017-2018](#)[Middlesex Middle School 2017-2018](#)

Date : March 13, 2018

One student had a Category 5 Hurricane in the palm of her hand.

Another a giant honey bee hovering over her head (*see picture*), while a group later inspected a digital model of DNA like detectives.

Inside two classrooms at Middlesex Middle School (MMS), students in the STEM and Computers classes recently had one foot in the real world and the other in the digital.

The experience was part of the Google Expeditions AR program — a unique experience offered to select schools nationally to introduce this new Google educational tool under development.

Watch this short video for an introduction:

For the day, a Google trainer worked with STEM teachers David Fetter and Jim Brochinsky, and Computer teachers Sandy Norelli and Timara Bruton.

Students were handed devices on selfie sticks and aimed them at QR codes. The QR codes signaled the creation of a digital image for viewing.

Unlike Virtual Reality (VR), which immerses a person in another world, Augmented Reality (AR) is a technology that allows a computer-generated image to be superimposed on a user's view of the real world, allowing users to place digital objects in real spaces — like a volcano on a student's desk.

I was able to secure the visit as a way to explore this emerging technology, which may make it easier for students to understand more difficult content by seeing it up close, and in a more active and engaging way.

In interviews with students following the experience, the overall feeling was that it would be a fun way of introducing a Science or Social Studies concept.

Google has not announced a release date for the new augmented reality technology.

— *Marc Marin is district director of instructional technology. This article is republished from the Darien Public Schools News of the Week newsletter.*