BEST (Building Excellence in Science and Technology). The students’ presentations were the most recent products of a program begun nearly 15 years ago by Murray. In 2006, Murray partnered with the Benton County Math & Science Center, one of eight similar high school programs across the state of Michigan, to bring the research experience to high school students. The following school year, BEST officially became a nonprofit organization, and to date over 650 students have conducted research. Projects have included synthesis of dyes; novel fragrances/flavours based on ginger; hybrid drugs of thiopepin, Vitamin B and Vitamin C; biocompatible polymers; biodegradable cosmetic chemicals; antifungal agents; and conducting polymers and molecular sensors with potential forensic applications.

Lina Roseman, a co-presenter of “Lactate Acyls,” explains that the application process for the Math & Science Center actually begins in eighth grade. Students from local high schools who show proficiency in math and/or science are given qualifying standardized tests. If their scores indicate an aptitude for math or science, they can then fill out an application for the Math & Science Center. Students accepted into the Math & Science Center spend half their day at their high school and travel to Andrews for the other half of their day. As freshmen, they take classes in geometry, biology and computer science in addition to their regular curriculum. They help. Some of these high schools are going to MIT, the majority will enter the fields of biology and health sciences. Both Bowman and her lab research partner, Kristine Gordon, a graduate of the Department of Biology, notes that BEST enabled her to “make worthwhile contributions now instead of having to wait until after I had an advanced degree. I know the research experience would give me a leg up as I start my career.”

Participation in early research does not just impart professional advantages and personal social benefits. The ability to participate in the BEST Early Research Program have learned skills that will help them solve many of the problems our world faces today, and their contributions can produce real innovations for the future.

Those who spend time in an Adventist elementary or high school quickly realize that Adventist schools promote an approach to learning different than most. Now, the rest of the nation is starting to take notice. A skeptic might argue that private schools such as those run by the Adventists are made up primarily of wealthy, white, upper-middle-class students, hence the reason for higher achievement. Not so.

Desmond Murray is the founder and CEO of BEST Early Research Program at Andrews University. In 2007, Murray partnered with the Benton County Math & Science Center, one of eight similar high school programs across the state of Michigan, to bring the research experience to high school students. The following school year, BEST officially became a nonprofit organization, and to date over 650 students have conducted research. Projects have included synthesis of dyes; novel fragrances/flavours based on ginger; hybrid drugs of thiopepin, Vitamin B and Vitamin C; biocompatible polymers; biodegradable cosmetic chemicals; antifungal agents; and conducting polymers and molecular sensors with potential forensic applications.

Below: High school students from the Math & Science Center at Andrews University. In their hands they held notes slightly nervous high school seniors sat in BEST Early Research Program classroom. And it helps. Some of these students are going to MIT, the majority will enter the fields of biology and health sciences. Both Bowman and her lab research partner, Kristine Gordon, a graduate of the Department of Biology, notes that BEST enabled her to “make worthwhile contributions now instead of having to wait until after I had an advanced degree. I know the research experience would give me a leg up as I start my career.”

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