

NASA teams up with Lewis Center

Students worldwide to track satellite through AV. control facility

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APPLE VALLEY — When NASA launches its first lunar mission in decades, the Lewis Center for Educational Research will lead students across the world in tracking and monitoring the mission’s spacecraft.

“Any time that students can be involved with real scientists it’s great, but when you’re a primary point in America’s return to the moon, that’s a big deal,” said Rick Piercy, president of the Lewis Center in Apple Valley. “We think this is the 21st century equivalent of Sputnik.”

The mission, named the Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite, or LCROSS, will search for water on the moon, with the ultimate goal of setting up lunar outposts by 2020.

Because the Lewis Center is the only K-12 public school in the nation with a fully functioning space radio-antenna, the NASA Ames Research Center chose the site to host the LCROSS mission control, said Jonas Dino, NASA Ames’ public affairs officer for LCROSS.

Piercy said the Lewis Center is geared to handle 1 million simulations and more than 30 million students across the globe to participate in the LCROSS program online, including homeschoolers and adults who want to track the mission.

Students may play a pivotal role in monitoring the satellite during time periods when NASA Ames does not have access to the Deep Space Network.

“If the kids hear a beeping sound, that means the spacecraft is asking for some help, which then they can report back to the LCROSS mission control and alert us,” said Dino.



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Allen Miranda reports to classmates while working on a GAVERT project at the Academy for Academic Excellence. The school will soon be taking part in NASA’s first Lunar mission in 20 years.

Teachers in grades K-12 can also incorporate the LCROSS mission into math and science curriculum.

“Instead of doing math problems where you get ‘a train from Chicago is going on a track and the other train’s coming from San Francisco’ hypothetical kind of problem, what they can do now is actual calculations on how fast the spacecraft is going, what its direction is and all these kinds of things that are hands on,” Dino said.

The LCROSS mission is scheduled to launch in March.

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Students at the Academy of Academic Excellence work on a project in the school’s GAVRT mission control center. GAVRT allows students to work on NASA research projects.



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Lewis Center for Educational Research students Nicole Clazie, left, Kelley Slone, center, and Kathleen Richmond work at the Mission Control Center on Tuesday.



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