

said Principal Phil Forte, adding that the achievement is unprecedented in the 19 years he has been at the school.

"He's the embodiment of scholarship brings to mind," Forte added. "He's meticulous about his work, he's always attentive in class and he always seems to know what's coming next."

Kevin entered Gibbons in the sixth grade, where they placed him in an eighth grade math class. This year his classes include Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. history, English and calculus — all college level courses — as well as religion, physics and Spanish.

Kevin, who tutors other students after school, said there is no secret to his test-taking success. "I just figured if I knew it, I knew it, and if I

On his first attempt this past December, Catonsville resident and Cardinal Gibbons High School junior Kevin Tai nailed a perfect 1600 on the SAT.

STAFF PHOTO BY DAVID HOBBY

didn't, I didn't," he said, adding that he walked away from the exam with no idea he had done so well.

As a junior, Kevin is still investigating colleges and majors, although he said he hopes he'll be able to find an occupation that

"makes me happy and makes me a whole lot of money."

He's a little mystified about the media attention his accomplishment has brought. "They only time newspapers write about you is when you're dead or you're famous," he

said, "and I'm not either."

He added that he's still waiting for the news to sink in. "I still don't believe it's me," he said. "It feels like somebody else did it and for some reason, I'm taking all the credit."

Class lectures out, debate in

BY CHERYL CLEMENS

Three times each week a crowd gathers in Lecture Hall II at UMBC for a challenging hour of debate and discussion. Passing a wireless microphone around the room, participants share insights, ask questions and make predictions.

Although it sounds like an episode of "Oprah," in reality it's Phil Sokolove's Biology 100 class.

For two years Sokolove has participated in a statewide program to explore "constructivist teaching," where teachers step back and actively aid students in discovering the answers to their questions as opposed to a traditional lecture format.

Last week Sokolove held a mock class for participants of a Maryland Collaborative for Teacher Preparation (MCTP) conference hosted by UMBC. More than 200 educators from around the state attended the conference, entitled "Changing Teaching and Changing Teacher Preparation in Science and Math."

"For four years we've been researching constructivism and how we can use this theory to better prepare middle school math and sci-

ence teachers," said Dr. Susan Blunck of UMBC. "This conference was our chance to share what we've discovered and get feedback from educators from around the state."

The project, now entering its final year, is funded by University of Maryland College Park through a \$6 million grant from the National Science Foundation.

Its goal is to find ways to alter teaching so that learning becomes more meaningful to students. Although the target age in the study is middle school, the techniques can be applied at any level.

Standard teacher lecturing and student memorization is no longer thought of as the ideal way for students to absorb and retain ideas. Instead, it's best to connect new lessons with information a student already possesses.

"We're learning it's not enough to tell students something," Blunck said. "You have to let them experience it and match it with something rooted in their own experience."

In addition, students must be free to ask questions, and teachers must be willing to let those questions, in part, drive the lesson.

In Sokolove's class, he outlines experiments and let's students make predictions about the outcomes. Classmates can add to and amend answers as they see fit before Sokolove reveals the actual outcome.

Some teachers in the project with smaller classes have completely done away with lectures in favor of hands-on experiments.

"This is not a transformation that takes place overnight," explained Blunck, adding that it takes time for teachers to successfully alter their classroom routines. "But it's worth the effort."

Sokolove said it has taken two years so far for him to feel comfortable with the technique, but that it has completely revolutionized his classes.

"I knew I was on the right track when I saw the evaluations students are asked to fill out at the end of each semester," he said. "Under the question 'Does the instructor have any personal characteristic that might hinder his ability to teach?', one of my students put, 'Yes, he makes us think.'"

For more information on MCTP, call (301) 405-1255.

<http://www.ilfegoeson.com>

SCHOOL
RN TO LOVE LEARNING
cepting Registration for
1997-1998

OPEN HOUSE
Sunday, February 9
From 2-4

ands-on science program
riting across the curriculum
primary and Middle School
t labs
omputer Science & foreign
anguage instruction
censed extended day care
available

plary School by the
nt of Education
dited by the Middle States
s and Schools and the
ndent Maryland Schools.

ester Rd.
Id. 744-1524

January 29, 1997