

## Raytheon thinks creatively

By Andrew J. Manuse / Daily News Staff

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**W**hat length of lumber do you need to cut to make the best angle for a skateboarding ramp? Pro skateboarder Tony Hawk knows.

How much force do you need to apply to a soccer ball to send it into the goal? Pro soccer player Mia Hamm knows.

And Raytheon Co. knows that middle school students would be more interested in learning mathematics if they could find out how celebrities and people with "cool" careers use math on the job.

A Raytheon survey of American middle schoolers found that most of them would rather clean their rooms than do their math homework. But the same survey said 94 percent of these students thought doing well in math was important.

"If we can help young students to understand that math can be their gateway to interesting careers by showing them that their heroes think math is important, then we're a step closer to averting a potential future shortage of people qualified for jobs requiring science, engineering and technical training," said William Swanson, chairman and chief executive of the Waltham-based defense and aerospace contractor.

That's why Raytheon launched MathMovesU.com yesterday, a Web site that shows students the realworld applications of math, gives them math-related games to play for prizes and the chance to win a celebrity substitute teacher for the day.

The site shows how celebrities such as Hawk and Hamm, as well as Boston Celtics legend Bill Russell, BMX biker Dave Mirra and basketball star Lisa Leslie use math while they're playing professional sports. But the site also shows how math is important to people with "cool jobs," such as video game designer Ted Price, concert tour manager David Ellison and fashion designer Jane Hamill.

"My job requires me to use math every day," said Kent Sako, a roller coaster designer on the site. "Designing the highest roller coasters, best hoops and fastest drops requires lots of precise calculations."

The MathMovesU initiative cost Raytheon million to get going, and the company promises to donate million per year to provide grants to teachers and schools to support math education and offer scholarships to students.

Through the site, teachers will also have access to MathCounts, a nonprofit group that has been promoting math education nationwide since 1984 with competitions, coaching and curriculum programs.

Jason Webster, a sixth-grade math teacher at Marlborough Middle School, said MathMovesU.com would "absolutely" be helpful for getting students excited about the subject.

"A lot of the things we do in class to prepare for MCAS, if they were underlined by real-world examples, that helps," said Webster. "Anything that can energize kids will help motivate them to learn."

Jim Stanton, director of a program at the Metro South/West Regional Employment Board in Framingham that connects students with internships at high-tech companies, said Raytheon is taking "a significant leadership step" toward building the work force of tomorrow.

"This is exactly the type of corporate leadership that we need to make parents, students and teachers aware that math (skills) are the most indispensable literacy skills of the 21st century," said Stanton. "So many jobs paying from good to very good wages will require students to have very good math skills. The idea of trying to excite kids is just what's needed."