Fourth-grade teachers went back to school this week, studying the skulls of chimps and humans in a program to help them inspire in their pupils a love of science.

Armin Moczek, associate professor of biology at Indiana University, showed the teachers, meeting at WonderLab, how the varying structures of the skulls indicated how the species lived life.

The elementary teachers from Indiana are attending for the eighth Science Standards in a Snap through Friday at the WonderLab to learn new ways to teach students. Science Standards in a Snap shows how to teach science content using skills as outlined in the Indiana academic standards for the subject.

Moczek said it is the program’s job to provide the teachers with suggestions on what is good for their classrooms.

“This is not meant for IU faculty to tell teachers how to do their job better; they do their job very well,” he said. “But there are some things we may be able to offer them, like maybe a resource to teachers. They face some pretty significant challenges in their classrooms, but sometimes we have suggestions for them that might make it easier for them to teach the kind of curriculum they have to teach.”

Indiana academic standards include investigating different physical, earth and life sciences as well as learning how to operate different technologies scientists use daily. The workshop focuses on all of the areas while incorporating the language arts by showing teachers how to integrate the two subjects for their students.

Moczek taught sessions including language arts and science integration, plant adaptations, skulls and teeth to show teachers different materials they could use to study science in the classroom.

“The skulls are a good opportunity to drive home the Indiana science teaching standards for grade 4,” he said. “One of those standards is how organisms have adapted to meet different environmental challenges. Skulls are a great way to do that because they don’t run away. If you know where to look, they can tell you a lot about the animal.”

Erika Peek, a teacher from Summit Elementary School, said the workshops prepared the teachers to apply different materials in the classroom they can use right away.

“The resources have been the biggest thing for me,” she said. “Anytime you give me some tools that I can use or think about using in a different way kind of inspires you to not only use what they’ve taught you, but to
start investigating on your own some other possible uses for tools and other materials.”

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H-T staff photo Fourth-grade teachers have been studying these skulls this week in a WonderLab program for teachers.

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