

MUW Roger F. Wicker Center for Creative Learning Receives \$1.5 Million for CHAMPS Project



Creating
High
Achievement in
Mathematics and
Problem
Solving

The Roger F. Wicker Center for Creative Learning at Mississippi University for Women was recently awarded a three year grant totaling \$1,520,458 from the Mississippi Department of Education for the CHAMPS (Creating High Achievement in Mathematics and Problem Solving) Project. Providing professional development for 5th-8th grade teachers of mathematics, the CHAMPS Project is one of only five Mathematics and Science Partnerships awarded by MDE. CHAMPS is a partnership between Mississippi University for Women, the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, and 17 surrounding school districts in Northeast Mississippi.

"The Mathematics Science Partnership (MSP) project is a critical component of the work of the Center," said Dr. Suzanne Bean, director of the Center for Creative Learning at MUW. "This is the 4th time the Center has been awarded this grant, and through the MSP grants we have established a pattern of strengthening the effectiveness of middle school mathematics teachers. We believe this kind of innovative professional learning provides sustainable improvements in the quality of teaching in Northeast Mississippi schools."

"A unique feature of the MSP program is that teachers who are elementary certified can earn highly qualified status in mathematics by participating," added Kate Brown, CHAMPS project director. Continuing education credit is also provided to all teacher participants.

The goal of CHAMPS is to improve teacher quality by providing a comprehensive program of sustained professional development. Each component offered by CHAMPS is grounded in empirical research that demonstrates the importance of sustained professional development and the positive correlation between teacher quality and student achievement.

A 2006-2007 CHAMPS participant teacher had this to say about the project, "the CHAMPS Project brings together teachers from different areas of Mississippi and encourages teachers to

evaluate their quality of teaching mathematics. The CHAMPS Project inspired us to set higher goals for ourselves and our students.”

Sarah Sumners, CHAMPS projects manager remarked, “while the ultimate goal of professional development is to improve student achievement, we hope to accomplish this by creating confident, effective teachers who are well versed in the subject area of mathematics.”

Specific program objectives focus on positively impacting student achievement by improving teacher quality through the following: (1) increasing mathematics content knowledge; (2) increasing knowledge of the Understanding by Design framework; (3) increasing the use of manipulatives and inquiry-based instructional strategies; (4) increasing the appropriate alignment of teaching activities to the state curriculum standards; (5) increasing the leadership activities of participants within their schools; (6) increasing the participants’ involvement in high-quality professional development activities; and (7) increasing middle school mathematics achievement.

To meet these objectives, each year the CHAMPS Project offers a two-week summer institute, four follow-up mini-conferences, a mentoring program, classroom visits throughout the school year, the opportunity to attend state, regional, and national conferences in mathematics, an online community using WebCT, and an interactive project website. The 2007 application deadline is May 1. Interested teachers should visit the Center’s website at www.muw.edu/ccl or contact Sarah Sumners at (662) 241-6088.