

Partnerships & Grants Enhance Learning Cultures In Schools

Through a collaborative effort to assist K-12 students, the School of Education is partnering with area school districts through a number of funded activities, including science education, reading and mathematics.

VISIONS (Visions for Improving Science in Our Neighborhood Schools) is an Eisenhower grant that enhances science education through a series of workshops and activities taking place at nine Grand Rapids elementary schools.

The Urban Teacher Academy for Elementary Science and Mathematics is funded through a \$200,000 congressional award and builds on the work initiated by VISIONS. The UTA works with five GRPS schools and Bowen Elementary in the Kentwood School District, promoting the use of inquiry based science by expanding teacher skills through workshops, summer writing sessions and mentoring prospective teachers in elementary science.

Among the other grant-based activities which the School of Education is involved include DREAMSS (Developing, Reflecting, Explaining, Achieving, in Middle School Science), which is \$100,000 grant from the national No Child Left Behind initiative that funds programs if more than 20 percent of a school district's population falls below the poverty line. It is designed to increase the knowledge and expand the use of science and its applications in classrooms.

Middle Start II is a program designed to strengthen the linkage of middle schools in Ottawa, Kent, Muskegon and parts of Allegan counties interested in school reform. A \$200,000 grant from the Academy for Educational Development facilitates the creation of a middle school network and offers professional development for participating schools.

The Teacher Academy links programs that involve GVSU students in

their growth to become effective leaders and supports school reform efforts, while giving back to society through volunteer work. It supports the efforts of School of Education Dean Elaine C. Collins, Ph.D., and her initiative for social responsibility as a way to reach educational success.

A new element of the Teacher Education Academy is creating a cross cultural student teaching environment. It will be accomplished by teaching in areas outside of West Michigan.

The first initiative is being established in Broward County, Fla., which provides a diverse multi-cultural classroom setting for student teachers. It is being supervised by Dr. Patsy Fox, and coordinated by Dr. Linda McCrea and former interim dean Dr. Anne Mulder, who now resides in Florida. Other faculty members involved include Lorraine Alston, Susan Carson and Jennifer Mahon. The first cohort in the cross cultural elementary student teaching program will commence during the winter of 2004 in south Florida.

In an effort to coordinate the grant writing and the implementation of those efforts, the School of Education has established a grants taskforce. The taskforce, headed by professor Loretta Konecki, will oversee and support all grant related activities within the School of Education.

"What we are trying to do is establish a culture of grants and form an advisory committee to help initiate where we want to go," Konecki said. "We also have a task force that is developing resources for the School of Education, which would create one source of resources for the institution."

"It is all related to serving as an umbrella for the partnerships we have. It's about bringing together and building on what we are already doing in a cohesive way."

'Learning To Give' Promotes Character

The School of Education at Grand Valley State University is "Learning to Give," thanks, in part, to a new grant and partnerships with local school districts.

The Learning to Give Foundation and School of Education have partnered into a program to implement the LTG curriculum in West Michigan schools. Five pilot schools are expected to be admitted to the partnership by January, 2004, according to Amy Moore, assistant Community Outreach director.

The LTG program – designed by classroom teachers, educational leaders and foundations – provides lessons designed to encourage young people to take positive action in their own lives, become involved in community initiatives, understand their ownership in a democratic society and aspire to promote overall good character in their deeds and way of life.

LTG lessons connect with the academic content already being taught to meet established standards and benchmarks. It is comprised of a body of more than 500 lessons that can be incorporated into already established teaching plans.

In September, 2003, the School of Education was awarded a \$175,000 grant by the Council of Michigan Foundations toward implementation of the program. It is supported by the Dorothy A. Johnson Center on Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, contingent on raising the required local matching funds.

The School of Education's Community Outreach Office is in charge of taking the leadership role toward implementing and meeting the expectations of the grant.



GVSU alum Vicki Gravelyn interacts with her fourth-grade class at Allendale Elementary School.

Adopt-A-District Partnership Begins

As part of its renewed commitment to community involvement, the School of Education is utilizing its resources and expertise to Adopt-A-District.

Allendale Public Schools has become the first district adopted.

Currently in its first year, the Adopt-A-District partnership provides hands-on volunteer support from the School of Education's faculty, staff and students in a multi-cultural setting. Faculty and students will provide the district with expertise and assistance in implementing various educational programs.

"Part of the mission of the School of Education is our social responsibility toward building strong communities," according to Amy

Moore, the SOE's liaison for the Adopt-A-District program. "This is one of the ways we are doing that."

The Adopt-A-District partnership with Allendale runs through the 2003-2004 academic year. Next year's partner will be selected in the spring of 2004.

The Adopt-A-District program is driven by the needs of the district. University services provide programs and expertise to help meet those needs.

Although the program does not offer financial assistance, the adopted district benefits from the expertise, volunteerism and service-learning projects by School of Education faculty, staff and students.