

Science program used locally being praised as being 'what's right in teacher preparation

MONTGOMERY -- A math and science program used in local public schools recently received praise on a national level.

With global competition in the areas of mathematics and science raising the bar for American students, more attention is being focused on what grades students are making and the type of preparation educators bring to the classroom. A national publication has singled-out an Alabama education program as a national model for other states to follow.

The December/January edition of Educational Leadership, a monthly educational journal, examines the various kinds of training science teachers are receiving and the direct correlation that teacher professional development is having on the bottom line -- student content knowledge and assessment performance. The article acknowledges that across the country, many students are not rapidly progressing in science. Of those students who are progressing, increased

teacher preparation from programs such as the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) is the key.

Steve Ricks, AMSTI section coordinator, said the effectiveness of the AMSTI program is apparent in the student achievement results in schools who have participated in AMSTI as opposed to those that have not.

"In every case, on every standardized test given by the State Department of Education, AMSTI schools outperformed non-AMSTI schools -- often dramatically," Ricks said. "Data clearly show that AMSTI is having a dramatic impact on student achievement as there are statistically significant differences in a number of comparisons. Even though AMSTI has not been fully implemented throughout the state, we are already beginning to see positive results and it is encouraging to know others see AMSTI as a viable form of teacher preparation."

The article indicates that of programs like

AMSTI, significant advantages can be derived, even if a teacher has majored in the science subject he/she teaches. The article states: "Even teachers who are highly prepared to teach their subjects need ongoing professional development that enables them to refine their skills. [AMSTI] provides substantial evidence that well-formulated and sustained professional development programs for teachers can significantly improve student achievement in science."

"A professional development program, such as AMSTI, gives teachers the opportunity to improve laboratory skills and encourages them to employ more hands-on instruction in the classroom."

Ricks said in the AMSTI summer institutes teachers learn both what to teach and how to teach it.

"AMSTI allows even the best teachers an opportunity to hone their skills and provides materials, equipment, and on-site support for teachers and administrators to

take new and innovative teaching methods back to the classroom," Ricks said. "The progress that students are making in AMSTI schools is a direct reflection of the instruction and training that their teachers receive during the summer institutes. The best teachers never stop learning. The more they grow, the more it benefits the students they teach."

The report suggests other professional development initiatives plan to use the evaluation technique employed by AMSTI to see if their programs hold such promise for increased science and math achievement.

As the global job market continues to call for expertise in math and science, Ricks reiterated the importance of the highest level of teacher training possible. "This is about the future of our children and making sure they have every advantage available to them in order to succeed in an increasingly competitive world," Ricks said.

For more information visit www.amsti.org.



Photo courtesy of Barr Photography

Reid honored at Patrician

BUTLER -- In appreciation for her work with students in grades K4-3rd as they prepared for the Christmas program held last month, Trina Reid was recently awarded this sterling silver bread basket by the students and faculty at Patrician Academy.

SCES holds DIBELS workshop for parents

GILBERTOWN -- Julie McKieven, consultant from Parents as Partners in Education, conducted a parent workshop at Southern Choctaw Elementary on Monday, January 8. The purpose of the workshop was to empower parents in ways that they can help their children at home. Parents were shown the basic premises of the DIBELS reading assessment and received a skill box filled with activities to be used as they work with their children at home. According to Principal Jacqui James, 38 parents signed in for the 45-minute session, and a total of 120 were present for the PTO meeting that followed the workshop. The workshop was sponsored by SCES, the 21st Century program, and federal programs.

Choctaw Sun photo by Colin Merritt

Reynolds makes Dean's List at UWA

LIVINGSTON -- The University of West Alabama has named Courtney C. Reynolds, of Butler, to the Dean's List for the Fall 2006 academic semester.

To reach the Dean's List, students must earn at least a 3.25 grade point average while attempting at least twelve semester hours.

SCA honor roll for 2nd 9-weeks period

South Choctaw Academy has announced honor roll listings for the 2nd 9-weeks grading period.

1st GRADE -- "A" Zack Dees, Ashley Carlisle, Dylan Kennett, Jack Miller, and Emily Sikes. "B" Noah Adams, Courtlan Frost, Skylar Gibson, and Tori Rogers.

2nd GRADE -- "A" Michele Brown, Andrew Carney, Kellie Carney, Kassi Giles, Taylor Hanna, Chloe Robinson, Caleigh Smith, and Haleigh Tyson. "B" Griffin Bryan, Tehya, Britain Weeks.

3rd GRADE -- "A" Emilee Jenkins, Bailey Manning, Zach Mosley, Hunter Owen, Caroline Wigley, and Whit Wilkins. "B" Carney Bradley, Amanda Brooks, Colton Clark, Logan Dees, Colton Pruitt, and Joshua Roberts.

4th GRADE -- "A" Sarah Abston, Anne-Claire Cummings, John Downey, and Bree Manning. "B" Callyn Bird, Hope Boykin, and Wesley Heathcock.

5th GRADE -- "A" Adam Bonner and Joseph. "B" Macy Bush, Kayla James, Jhett Nordan, Madison Sikes, and Haley Turner.

6th GRADE -- "A" Mason Bonner, Chesley Bowerman, Bradley Clark, Hannah Jackson, and Holden Johnson. "B" Teresa Boykin, Patton Carney, Bree Copeland, Claire Giles, Madison Hearn, J.J. Jenkins, Lauren Lovette, Landrum Roberts, and Timothy Watson.

7th GRADE -- "B" Corey Brunner, Dana Downey, Connor Frost, Colton Mazingo, and Lauren Wilkins.

8th GRADE -- "A" Brittany Carney, Shelby Fulcher, and Payton Hanna. "B" Rodney Grice, Corbin Johnson, Adrienne Smith, Harley Whittington, and Zack Phillips.

9th GRADE -- "A" Joshua Manley. "B" Tiffany Adams, Cassy Arrington, and Lilyan Mosley.

10th GRADE -- "B" Angel Burford, Brent Donald, and Tanner Johnson.

11th GRADE -- "A" Paige Gibson, and Koen Lindsey. "B" Tyler Fulcher, Cierra Giles, and Cortney Mazingo.

12th GRADE -- "A" Laura Abston, Meagan Carney, Brandi Charlton, and Lauren Jackson. "B" Randi Arrington, Amanda Busby, Jessie Chadwick, Kate Dahlberg, Maggie Doggett, and Trystan Mosley.

Healthcare scholarships available through BWMH

DEMOPOLIS -- The Bryan Whitfield Memorial Hospital Auxiliary is now accepting applications for scholarships for the 2007-2008 academic year for those pursuing careers in healthcare.

A total of six scholarships will be presented in 2007, three to Tombigbee Healthcare Authority family members and three members of the general public will be assisted with their educations.

Students can pick up an application from their guidance counselors at school or they stop by the hospital to pick up an application. Eligibility requirements for each scholarship are as follows.

Any individual who is a graduating high school senior or above may apply for the scholarships as long as their chosen field of study is within the healthcare professions. The applicant must pro-

vide proof of residency in either of the following counties in Alabama: Marengo, Sumter, Hale, Choctaw, Perry, Greene, and Clarke. The applicant must possess a high school education or equivalent GED or other qualification relevant to the field of study applicable.

The disbursement of funds for scholarship students shall be limited to tuition, books and lab fees. These shall be paid directly to the institution in which they are enrolled.

Those who have received or applied for one of these scholarships in the past are welcome to apply for the scholarships each year.

To obtain an application or more information, call the Volunteer Services Director at 334-287-2626. Scholarship applications are also available online at www.bwmh.com.



Submitted photo

SCES SGA conducts food drive

GILBERTOWN -- Southern Choctaw Elementary SGA members recently conducted a canned food drive and used the proceeds to support needy families in the local community during the Christmas season. Piggly Wiggly of Gilbertown donated a ham/turkey to go along with the canned items as they are distributed. "We are working really hard to help support our local community and those in need," members said. "We only hope that they have a Merry Christmas and remember the reason for the season." Pictured are -- Jenna Presley, SGA President; G.P. Barefield, Vice-President; Michaela Dew, Treasurer; Mason Turner, Alisha Mosley, and Shaleka Napier, SGA Representatives.

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