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Butler to Lead School Organization and Science Achievement Project

Posted **June 30, 2011** at 4:38 pm by [Melanie Marquez](#)

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The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded a grant to the University of South Florida St. Petersburg (USFSP) to study school structure and science success. Malcolm B. Butler, PhD, associate professor of science education at USF St. Petersburg, is principal investigator of the five-year study. Butler brings extensive expertise in elementary science education and in professional development of teachers' science content knowledge.

The School Organization and Science Achievement (SOSA) Project at USF St. Petersburg will document factors explaining variations in science achievement across schools enrolling ethnically and linguistically diverse students. A concurrent NSF-sponsored grant at the University of Connecticut will allow researchers at both institutions, in collaboration with school districts in their respective states, to identify school leadership practices that can be connected with reductions in achievement gaps relative to student ethnicity, English fluency, and social status.

According to Butler, "Science achievement in elementary schools is not always successfully measured by typical assessment instruments. There are schools doing exceptionally well that don't fit into the standard measures. We want to determine what those factors are that allow students to be successful, especially in the sciences."

Vivian Fueyo, PhD, Dean of the USFSP College of Education adds, "This project is immeasurably important for both teachers and their students. Success in science, particularly in the elementary grades, can serve as the cornerstone for science learning throughout a child's schooling."

By working with 150 schools in two states, this collaborative research project aims to generate findings that can be utilized by various school systems. USFSP and UConn researchers will also share program resources, strategies, and a website.

The NSF grant process is very competitive and over 500 proposals were received and reviewed for similar studies this year. Over the anticipated five-year research period, the value of the grant for The SOSA Project awarded to USFSP will be near one million dollars.

"Now the real work begins," says Butler, "and we expect that some exciting and useful information will come out of our ongoing research."

To learn more about Professor Butler and his NSF Grant, please contact Malcolm Butler at (727) 873-4058 or mbbutler@mail.usf.edu.

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