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ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (June 16, 2011) – A $500,000 award from the Next Generation Learning Challenges collaboration will support the technologically-enhanced curriculum and professional development for Pinellas County middle-school mathematics teachers in the SunBay Digital Mathematics program. The SunBay program, the result of two-year collaboration between the College of Education at USF St. Petersburg and SRI International, is designed to increase student success in mathematics at the middle-school level.

“We’re thrilled to expand our work and continue to partner with SRI International and Pinellas County Schools to reach more teachers and students in the middle grades,” said Vivian Fueyo, dean of the College of Education at USFSP and the Principal Investigator on the project. “Success in mathematics, particularly algebra in the middle grades, is directly correlated with future success in the learning of advanced mathematics and science.”

By using innovative classroom technology and integrating curriculum modules tied to high standards, the methods emphasized in SunBay Digital Mathematics use dynamic representations and problem-solving to deepen mathematics learning and provide high-quality teacher professional development.

“When middle school teachers integrate dynamic technology into their classroom, they deepen their understanding of mathematics and teaching strategies, and as a result can positively impact student learning,” said George Roy, assistant professor of mathematics education and the project’s Co-Principal Investigator.

Eighteen Pinellas County middle school teachers in ten schools have participated in the program over the last two years. The new funding will help the program involve more middle school teachers, particularly those with at least half of their students coming from low-income families or underrepresented groups, and show them the difference SunBay Digital Mathematics can make in their middle-school classrooms.

Next Generation Learning Challenges is funded by philanthropic foundations, educators and technologists focused on addressing barriers to educational innovation. The College of Education at USFSP is one of nineteen organizations to receive the award out of an applicant pool of 230.

Teachers in the SunBay program approach mathematics problem solving with computer