8-20-2010

Press release : 2010 : 08 : 20 : Pinellas Teachers Enhance Mathematics Education with Technology

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Digital Math

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. – Eleven middle school mathematics teachers from Pinellas County schools developed technology-based lessons this summer to help effectively teach every child that enters their classrooms.

Their work, completed during the first part of a five-course certificate in Digital Mathematics at the College of Education, involved approaching mathematics problem solving with computer applications, web resources and group collaboration. They used an interactive SMART Board, a teaching and presentation touch screen that allows teachers to write on projections in digital ink and interact with applications.

“This was a methods course designed to have teachers teach mathematics in a different way than they may have in the past,” said George Roy, assistant professor of mathematics education and the course instructor. “For their culminating project, the teachers created a lesson for their classroom which addressed the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.”

The teachers presented their projects Aug. 4 to business leaders and a representative from Progress Energy, the organization that funded this first course through a grant, allowing the teachers to complete the course for free. The lessons delved into mathematics problems by first using digital applications to explore mathematics concepts. Their students will use applications to understand concepts such as probability, patterns, and equations to then collaborate with classmates and develop solutions for practical applications.

The content is tied to SunBay Digital Mathematics, a collaborative project among the USFSP College of Education, SRI International and Pinellas County Schools designed to increase student achievement on the major topics of Florida’s Next Generation Sunshine State mathematics standards for grades 6 to 8.
“This whole age of students, they’re used to being immersed in technology and we have to keep up with them as teachers,” said Bridget Bohnet, a sixth and seventh grade teacher at Clearwater Fundamental. “Every child has different needs. This is one more strategy to engage every child because the more hands-on these lessons are, the better. Depending solely on lecture-directed teaching is obsolete.”

The SunBay Digital Mathematics project ties to science, technology, engineering and mathematics initiatives in the strategic plans of the College of Education, the school district, and the state of Florida. Vivian Fueyo, dean of the College of Education, serves as the principal investigator for the SunBay Digital Mathematics project.

“Success in mathematics and science in the middle grades correlates with future success in the advanced mathematics and science required for access to college and to success in careers such as engineering,” Fueyo said. “Success in school and access to higher education also has impact on the economic development of the region and the retention of intellectual capital.”

The teachers in the certificate program will continue their program with another course during the fall 2010 semester. Concurrently, a new cohort of middle school teachers will be trained in the digital mathematics approaches being studied in the SunBay Digital Mathematics program.

To learn more about the SunBay Digital Mathematics collaborative or if you’re interested in funding tuition costs for the teacher participants in the Digital Mathematics certificate program, please contact George Roy at (727) 873-4646 or royg@mail.usf.edu.