

'Let's Get Physical' connects teachers with professors to promote primary students' understanding of physical science and physics

Teachers teaching teachers

by Mandy Jackson

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The College of Education has received a \$44,763 Eisenhower Grant to help primary school teachers find ways to teach physical science and physics to kindergarten through second grade students.

The title of the grant-winning project at SCSU is "Let's Get Physical."

The main focus of Eisenhower Grants is continuing education in mostly science and math, according to Pam Minden, fiscal director of the project. Minden said the Eisenhower grants started out just for science but now include math.

Eisenhower grants are from the U.S. Department of Education and are distributed by state departments. Submissions are made to the Department of Children, Families and Learning. SCSU won three Eisenhower grants this year, two of which went to the biology department.

Minden described the application process as competitive.

Kathleen Ofstedal, a professor of child and family studies, Beverly Kochmann and Linda Scott-Halverson, professors of teacher development, and Minden wrote the proposal for the project.

While Minden is the fiscal

director, the other three will do the instructing.

For two weeks this summer, 30 primary teachers from around the state will be at SCSU learning how to teach science concepts using discovery centers, playground equipment and household items, according to Ofstedal.

"They have to understand it so they can teach it," Ofstedal said.

She said many kindergarten through second grade teachers have forgotten what they learned about science when they were students.

The class will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, from June 15 to June 26.

Most of the money from the grant will pay each of the primary teachers a \$100 per week stipend as well as pay for all of their books and tuition.

Free lodging will be provided on

campus, or mileage will be paid to the teachers who will commute.

Late last fall the grant faculty

submitted its proposal, and the members found out they won in January.

To prepare their proposal they had to show a need for the project. Ofstedal said they surveyed several different districts to assess the need.

Then she said they came up with a plan that would not be scary for primary teachers.

"We have representatives from the St. Paul school system and from Benton and Stearns Counties, and outstate as far as Minnewasca," Ofstedal said.

She said primary teachers from both urban and rural schools are participating in the project.

"One of our goals is to take the fear out of teaching science,"

Ofstedal said. "We are going to connect the learning they do with the graduation

standards of the state of Minnesota."

One of those standards is teaching through inquiry and

another is teaching through authentic assessment.

"They (primary teachers) won't be giving standardized tests," Ofstedal said.

She said the learning of primary students is assessed through observation.

The "Let's Get Physical" project will show primary teachers how to use hands-on learning processes, because primary students don't learn science through reading books, Ofstedal said.

A list-serv will be set up for the teachers who will teach and learn in the "Let's Get Physical" project this summer.

It will be a place for them to discuss the ideas they will learn. They will be able to share information about how the ideas work in their classrooms.

The three SCSU faculty who will teach the project this summer will go into the primary teacher's classrooms during the next school year to team-teach some of the ideas learned this summer.

So far, the project has proved itself to be popular. Ofstedal said the project has received far too many applications.

People from the Eisenhower Grant program told them to start a waiting list and submit a proposal for the same grant next year.



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Kathleen Ofstedal

PROFESSOR OF
CHILD AND FAMILY STUDIES