AIMS Elementary MSP
East Baton Rouge Parish School System | Louisiana State University | 2009 - 2011

Project Details

Lead District: East Baton Rouge Parish School System
Partner District: Zachary Community School District
Higher Education Partner: Louisiana State University (LSU)
Federal Funds Received: $355,000 (Two years)
Participating schools in the district: Belfair Montessori Elementary School, Bernard Terrace Elementary, Brookstown Elementary, Brownfields Elementary, Crestworth Elementary, Forest Heights Academy, Glen Oaks Park Elementary, Highland Elementary, Howell Park Elementary, Jefferson Terrace Elementary, LaBelle Aire Elementary, LaSalle Elementary, Melrose Elementary, Park Forest Elementary, Parkview Elementary, Shenandoah Elementary, South Boulevard Elementary, Westdale Heights Academy, Westminster Elementary, Zachary Elementary

Variety in Approaches Key to Student Growth

“Come to my classroom if you’d like to see [what I am doing]. From the moment you walk in, it is evident that I am an MSP learner. The thinking maps, learning logs, teaching style, hands-on activities. You can see it.” This statement is from an Achievement and Inquiry in Math and Science (AIMS) Project participant. This MSP success story tells the tale of a classroom that is vibrant with engaged students learning through many different modalities. Project AIMS implements a broad array of strategies to differentiate learning experiences so that every student has the opportunity to achieve by using his or her own learning preferences.

Learning Logs: A Valuable Instructional Tool to Increase Student Growth

Mathematics and science learning logs, cornerstones of Project AIMS, continue to provide vehicles for participants to record their learnings, reflect on their experiences in the MSP, and learn how to use the logs with their students. Unsolicited reports abound from Project AIMS teachers touting the power of learning logs, not only for themselves, but for their students, as well. Many have implemented the logs in their own classrooms and have found them to be extremely valuable in helping their students develop organizational and note-taking skills.

Formative Assessments Catch Student Misconceptions EARLY

Commit and Toss, Friendly Talk, Traffic Light Dots, and other formative assessment features of Project AIMS help the instructors gauge prior participant content knowledge and growth in understanding over time. Modeling these strategies illustrates ways in which student-friendly assessments can quickly and easily be included in the participants’ classrooms. For example, during Commit and Toss the instructor asks a question. The participants write his/her answers on a sheet of paper without their names, then everyone forms his/her paper into a ball and begins to toss it to their peers in the room for 20 seconds. When the instructor calls time, the tossing has thoroughly mixed up the responses and each person opens up and reads an answer. Because it is not the reader’s response, it removes all stigma of sharing the wrong answer. This non-threatening approach brings to light many misconceptions in a very short period of time.
Literacy in the Mathematics and Science Classroom

Project AIMS participants discovered that teaching mathematics and science through active learning strategies enhanced literacy and communication skills. Rather than relegating each subject area to specific boundaries, Project AIMS instructors consciously implemented literacy strategies across subject areas, with very positive results. The instructors called attention to the strategies and had the participants delve deeper into how they could implement the model into their own classrooms.

Pro-Active Teacher-Leaders

Project AIMS teachers have become teacher-leaders by attending and presenting at state and national conferences, writing and receiving grants from many different funding agencies, and collaborating at their schools with their colleagues to improve mathematics and science instruction. One teacher received a Fund for Teachers Fellowship for travel, and with her class was the national grand prize winner of Disney’s Planet Challenge Environmental Competition! As a group, they have strengthened partnerships with their colleagues who work in schools across the parishes, disseminating information learned during Project AIMS.

Project AIMS Increases Student Performance

Improved teacher knowledge, with an average growth of 19.3% from the Summer Institute pre-test to the post-test, greatly impacted student performance. The results from state iLEAP and LEAP scores in mathematics and science show significant performance gains made by students of AIMS teachers. Students of Project AIMS teachers outperformed their peers in both mathematics and science. As the data below illustrate, proficiency scores of AIMS students were substantially above the district and state averages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011 Math % Proficiency Scores</th>
<th>2011 Science % Proficiency Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AIMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3 iLEAP</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4 LEAP</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5 iLEAP</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Project Quotes

“Project AIMS has improved my teaching more than any other type of workshop. Because I know more, my students learn more. I would like to do more, and wish these projects were also available for Language Arts.”

“I deepened my content knowledge, learned a variety of teaching strategies, and networked with other teachers for professional support and ideas.”

“MSP provides research-based activities that are proven to increase student scores and understanding.”

“The teachers of the program are highly qualified and we are always presented with great activities to incorporate in our classroom.”

“This project encouraged peer collaboration and brainstorming. Participants were actively engaged in hands-on experiences and activities that required high-order thinking skills.”

“There was a wide range of hands-on activities and we were given most of the materials we used.”

“This project gave me a chance to interact with coworkers and share ideas and different strategies.”

“We were able to network with other teachers and learn things they did in their classrooms. We learned many new ideas and new things to try.”