Project Details

**Lead District:** East Baton Rouge Parish School System

**Partner Districts:** City of Baker School System, Advance Baton Rouge

**Higher Education Partner:** Louisiana State University (LSU)

**Federal Funds Received:** $185,000 (one year)

**Participating schools:**
- East Baton Rouge Parish School System: Broadmoor Middle School, Capitol Middle School, Glasgow Middle School, Mayfair Middle School, McKinley Middle Magnet School, Northeast High School, Park Forest Middle School, Sherwood Forest Middle Magnet School, Southeast Middle School, Staring Educational Center, Valley Park Alternative School, Westdale Middle School, Woodlawn Middle School
- City of Baker School System: Baker Middle School
- Advance Baton Rouge: Glen Oaks Middle School

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**Math & Science Partnership**

**GOALS**
- Increase teacher content knowledge and teaching skills
- Increase number of effective teachers of math and science
- Improve student achievement
- Increase student interest in STEM programs and opportunities

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**East Baton Rouge Parish MSP**

*PROJECT MATH 8 - MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECT | 2011 - 2012*

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**Harry Potter and the Magic of Mathematics, Perplexing Puzzles, Major Martian Headache, Vampires—Beware of Twilight and Growing Staircases!**

While the activities in the title sound as if they might describe a fun day at Disney or Universal Studios, they are actually part of something even more exciting – **Project Math 8**! The lessons capture the attention of not only the **Project Math 8** participants, but their students, as well. Engaging, motivational activities bring an element of interest and excitement to the classroom and entice the learner to actually want to “figure it out!” Arriving at a solution through problem-solving is fundamental to mathematics. What better way to learn than through activities that not only provide the content reinforcement, but also draw the learner into a motivational context? Who could pass up the opportunity to play Swamp People Math to discover the combinations for the “Choot’em” probability scratch off game?

“We went over and beyond what our students would be doing,” remarked one participating teacher, attesting to the core component of the MSP projects—gaining a deep conceptual understanding of mathematical content. **Project Math 8** teachers must have a strong command of the content in order to answer inquisitive students’ questions that they encounter every day and to help students learn at a conceptual level. To ensure that teacher participants receive targeted instruction based on the relevant Grade Level
Expectations, formative assessments are provided at the beginning of each session with checkpoints for understanding throughout. This technique provides the evidence needed by the project instructors to make nimble, informed instructional decisions.

Instructional strategies relevant to the learner are also a key feature of Project Math 8. For example, You Think Gas is Expensive? encourages the learner to delve deeper into the subject. Using relevant topics also provides an important model for the middle school classroom, one that can easily be manipulated to illustrate something middle-schoolers may be interested in, such as movie theatre prices. Another key feature of Project Math 8 is its focus on the use of technology. Techniques incorporating TI-73 Graphing Calculators with TI Smartview include graphing data and using specific apps on the calculator to address common misunderstandings and to help students practice concepts. Beam Me Up Dale and Swamp People Math draw heavily on this technology and prepare the project participants to appropriately implement these tools in their own classrooms.

Project Math 8 participants are also introduced to the greater mathematics community through participation in the Louisiana Association of Teachers of Mathematics, further expanding the reach of the MSP. The participants appreciate the opportunity to network and gain expertise in mathematics from others across the state. Feedback received from the participants upon their return from the conference illustrates that they are rejuvenated by their experiences, exposed to new ideas in learning, and validated by what they are doing in their own classrooms.

Project Quotes

“My goals were very much met by the summer institute. The summer institute helped me with some of my misconceptions. Also, it is going to be my first full time teaching eighth graders and the summer institute really helped me with reinforcing the concepts.”

“I gained greater insight into using the middle school graphing calculator as an instructional tool in the classroom.”

“The strengths [of Project Math 8] were networking with other teachers and learning from each other, [and]...learning activities to bring back to my classroom.”

“The activities gave me the opportunity to explore certain topics, GLEs and curriculum. We went over and beyond [the content] our students would be doing.”

“Two strengths of the MSP program are that we were allowed to work in groups on all activities and we were given lots of time to discuss, explore, and discover connections among skills covered during the learning sessions.”

“The instructors listened to our suggestions and adjusted the presentation each day to include our suggestions.”

“The instructors made the activities relevant in different ways. They brought in data from alligator hunting and tied that into the TV show (Choot ‘Em). We used it to create different types of graphs.”