Project Details

**Lead District:** East Baton Rouge Parish School System  
**Partner District:** Advance Baton Rouge  
**Higher Education Partner:** Louisiana State University (LSU)  
**Federal Funds Received:** $185,000 (one year)  
**Participating schools:**  
Advance Baton Rouge: Dalton Elementary

Creative Activities Lead to Deep Conceptual Understandings

How can you use the human body to teach mathematics? Try measuring your foot! In the MSP project *Sum It Up*, instructors lead the learner into the world of measurement by incorporating “How Big is a Foot!,” a delightful book by author Rolf Myller. From this starting point, participants went on to create their own unique measuring tools to gauge the size of their shoes, a hands-on activity which reveals the importance of using standard measurements. Highlighting the impact of these instructional strategies, a *Sum It Up* teacher notes, “This was truly an example of hands-on, minds-on instruction. It was an awesome learning experience. I am excited that I had the opportunity to participate in this project!” Throughout the project, participants recorded their experiences and the new knowledge they acquired in interactive notebooks, or learning logs, as a way to process information as they received it. These learning logs functioned not only as a place to take notes, but also for the collection of data, brainstorming, reflection, and questioning; furthermore, they modeled the ways in which students could organize and record their own learning as the *Sum It Up* teachers implement these creative, motivational strategies in their classrooms.
“I was exposed to many new and interesting ways to approach the GLEs within the 5th grade curriculum,” stated a *Sum It Up* teacher as she reflected on her experiences in *Sum It Up*. Among these engaging instructional strategies, participants conducted several activities specifically designed to introduce strategies for collecting and representing data. Using data sets, such as a bag of brightly colored candies, teachers collected, organized, and interpreted real life data using various pictorial representations, including tally charts, pictographs, bar graphs, line graphs, and circle graphs. They even created a human bar graph to model their favorite colors! Through these activities, *Sum It Up* participants learned that our daily lives are filled with information that students can use to practice concepts for organizing and representing data, and the participants came away from the workshop with a fresh enthusiasm and new ideas for making math relevant beyond the classroom. Another teacher added, “My kids were delighted to try new approaches which make sense to them. Now they don’t have to remember a lot of rules.” In other words, students cannot only learn math – they can also like math!

**Music to a *Sum It Up* Teacher: “Ah-Ha! I Think I Got It!”**

The *Sum It Up* curriculum also included an emphasis on understanding place value and its relationship to numerical fluency. In order to address these concepts, participants were introduced to a variety of methods of performing operations on whole numbers, including making connections between addition and multiplication, as well as between subtraction and division. These place value concepts were then implemented in solving real life problems involving whole numbers. Through activities such as these, teachers’ mathematical knowledge was strengthened, contributing to more effective instruction in their own classrooms. As a *Sum It Up* teacher observed, “Having number sense makes it easier to teach and understand. It’s very rewarding to see and hear the Ah-ha! moments of your children when they finally find success working with numbers.”

**Project Quotes**

“The emphasis on a reformed method of teaching math means there was a desire that we look at multiple approaches to teaching content. That is the mark of a highly professional teacher.”

“The extensive content training and the actual experience with the activities that will be implemented in the classroom with our students make this MSP project a high quality PD.”

“This professional development was prepared by individuals who have student achievement their number one priority! I was completely blown away at how much information I learned and used in the classroom!”

“There is a lot of interaction between the participants and the facilitators. The activities are engaging and interaction is encouraged.”

“I gained a deep understanding of math content and learned new strategies to help my students.”

“We were able to get involved in the activities and actually get ideas from other teachers.”

“These instructors have a thorough knowledge at all levels and the ability to deliver it in a clear and concise manner.”

“The presenters were able to break down information to showcase the relevancy for the grade level we teach.”

“Totally interesting and so understandable anyone could redeliver it. The information was paced and presented effectively.”

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