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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cal Poly and Santa Maria-Bonita School District Receive \$1.8 Million Math Education Grant

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Cal Poly and the Santa Maria-Bonita School District received a \$1.8 million California Mathematics and Science Partnership grant from the state Department of Education to fund a program aimed at improving elementary and middle school student achievement in mathematics.

With this funding, Cal Poly will offer a three-year mathematics development program for local teachers called Central Coast STEM Institutes. The program will help teachers develop a curriculum that links mathematics to the real world.

"What we're trying to do is adapt the Cal Poly model of Learn by Doing into mathematics units for third- through eighth-grade teachers," said Kate Riley, a mathematics professor at Cal Poly who will lead the program.

Over the course of three years, 76 teachers from the district will receive substantial instruction in mathematics content and best teaching practices. They will partner with Cal Poly education and mathematics faculty members to construct curriculum modules — a group of lessons that include a hands-on activity — for example, creating scale architectural models to understand ratios and proportions. The curriculum modules will also align with the new Common Core State Standards.

"Applying mathematics in other contexts, such as simple engineering projects, helps students gain a conceptual understanding. It helps them relate math to the real world," Riley said. "In the 21st century, students need to move beyond 'add, subtract, multiply and divide' and into the application of mathematics."

A number of Cal Poly engineering faculty will be co-instructors, guiding teachers as they develop projects to take back to their classrooms. Central Coast community members who work in the engineering industry will also participate.

"Central Coast STEM Institutes will have a huge positive impact on our district," said Olivia Bolaños, director of curriculum and instruction for the Santa Maria-Bonita School District. "With the Common Core State Standards still being relatively new, our third- through eighth-grade teachers have this wonderful opportunity to learn how to teach differently and give our students the 21st century skills and engineering practices they need to be college and career ready."

Through an online platform, teachers who participate in the program will be able to share the curriculum they develop with their colleagues in the district and teachers throughout the state. The program also includes a peer evaluation and improvement process that will allow teachers to collaboratively improve the curriculum over time.

"We think this model will create and sustain positive change in the district and hopefully statewide," Riley said.

Links:

Cal Poly Mathematics Department: math.calpoly.edu
Santa Maria-Bonita School District: smbsd.org

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