

Daily World



DBP announces \$1.2 million grant for LEAD initiative

Program to increase student performance in P.C. public schools

By RANDY HOGAN
World Managing Editor

The Delta Bridge Project Tuesday awarded a \$1.2 million, three-year grant to help fund an initiative to improve student performance in Phillips County's three public school districts. Dr. Steven Murray, chairman of the Delta Bridge Project Steering Committee and chancellor of Phillips Community College made the formal announcement.

The \$1.2 million grant will be combined with in-kind matching funds for a three-year \$2.3 million investment in the Learning, Excelling, Achieving in the Delta (LEAD) initiative. According to Murray, the program will work on a classroom-by-classroom, building-by-building basis to substantially raise comprehensive student performance in literacy and math.

"Phillips County schools have the teaching staff to be able to take the professional development this grant will provide and take it to a level to improve instruction," said Suzann McCommon, Delta Bridge Project Educational Goal Team chair and Great Rivers Educational Cooperative director. "This is the kind of initiative our teachers have been requesting in order to help them become better in instruction."

The state's 2007 Benchmark Exam data reveals that the percentage of Phillips County students in grades three through high school who score below basic or basic is on average 10 to 30 percent worse than

the state average. Benchmark Exams have four scoring categories - Below Basic, Basic, Proficient and Advanced. In 2006, 74 percent of students who graduated from Phillips County public schools required remediation on entering college, compared with the statewide remediation rate of 48 percent.

LEAD's goal is to use state Department of Education-approved intensive training programs for principals, teachers and school board members in the Barton, Helena-West Helena and Marvell school districts in the following areas:

- The number and percentage of students scoring at proficient level or higher will increase annually by four percentage points or to state averages in each of the reported indicators.

- The number of principals who leave Phillips County public schools to seek similar employment in other areas will be reduced annually compared with the 2007-08 year baseline.

- The number of individuals recruited from outside Phillips County to serve as public school principals will be reduced annually compared with the 2007-08 baseline.

"We are certainly pleased that the Delta Bridge Project has seen fit to fund such a worthwhile project," commented Barton Superintendent Roy Kirkland. "This grant will enable our school to continue and even expand a program that has proven itself to

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be one of excellence."
"This Delta Bridge Project grant will aid us greatly in being able to inspect what we expect," said Ulicious Reed, Marvell superintendent. "The Marvell School District is pleased to participate."

E2E, Inc. will be the primary service provider for LEAD. E2E, Inc. provides customized staff development services and classroom support for teachers and

administrators.

"From my past and present work in these schools, I continually find caring and dedicated teachers and administrators that are willing to do whatever it takes to bring about positive change," said E2E President Dr. Donna Gordy. "E2E is looking forward to supporting them in this process."

The Delta Bridge Project's goals are outlined in Phillips

County's Strategic Community Plan. More than 300 Phillips County residents developed the plan during an 18-month strategic planning process.

The Strategic Community Plan is a blueprint for community development that includes 46 strategic goals and almost 200 action steps. They involve the five fundamental pillars of community life - economic development,

housing, education, leadership development and healthcare.

Besides the LEAD initiative, the Delta Bridge Project has generated a \$58 million investment in Phillips County since the Strategic Community Plan began in August 2005. Southern Financial Partners, a nonprofit community development organization founded in 1986, heads up the Delta Bridge Project.