Pitt has lead role in improving math, science education

Friday, October 25, 2002

By Carmen J. Lee, Post-Gazette Education Writer

While Pittsburgh school board members consider how to judge what's best in math education, the University of Pittsburgh's Learning Research and Development Center is being given a leadership role in a five-year, $35 million project to reform math and science education in schools throughout the nation.

The LRDC has long been involved in education reform nationally as well as locally. As part of the project being funded by the National Science Foundation, LRDC, Pitt and the University of Wisconsin will form a partnership known as Systemwide Change for All Learners and Educators, or SCALE.

The partnership is a component of the National Science Foundation's Math and Science Partnership program, a five-year national effort to unite higher education institutions with K-12 school districts. The program also is part of the federal No Child Left Behind plan to improve education.

The SCALE project includes four urban school districts -- Los Angeles Unified School District, Denver Public Schools, Providence, R.I., Public Schools and Madison, Wis., Metropolitan School District -- serving a total of nearly 900,000 students.

Its goals include implementing the best current math and science programs in each of the four districts, reforming teacher training and creating a research and evaluation component.

SCALE is designed to help improve student achievement in math, science, technology and engineering, particularly among minority, low-income and non-English-speaking students.
LRDC and its Institute for Learning will receive $2.85 million per year for its role in the project, which also will involve Pitt's science and engineering departments and School of Education. Lauren Resnick, the director of LRDC, and Christian Schunn, an LRDC research scientist, will co-direct the project.

"Reforming math and science education is an extremely complex task with many interconnected problems," Schunn said. "The goal is to make major improvements in the way almost a million kids in our partner schools learn math and science, and then to spread that success across the country."

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