

The Jackson Sun

New program to help young minority students excel in math
November 16, 2007 By TAJUANA CHESHIER

A new project called Strengthening Instruction in Tennessee Elementary Schools (SITES) will be implemented next year to help minority elementary students improve their performance in math and close the achievement gap.

The statewide project involves five elementary schools and five historically black colleges and universities.

The project has been awarded \$2 million for the first year of a five-year program, according to officials with the Educational Testing Service in Washington, D.C.

SITES was developed at the request of the Legislative Black Caucus and is also a result of collaboration between the Educational Testing Service and HBCUs.

Gov. Phil Bredesen was also involved in the early stages of program development.

In Jackson, Isaac Lane Technology Magnet Elementary and Lane College will be partnering to help math teachers.

Isaac Lane Principal Tisa Day said the program will target third- and fourth-grade teachers in her school.

"We're looking at that group because those are our TCAP (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program) years," Day said.

Six teachers will be involved.

Participants will attend weekend seminars at Lane College and will receive instruction on various techniques of teaching math.

Day and Lane College President Wesley C. McClure are having their first organizational meeting next week.

"The state of Tennessee is wise in embracing the view that the achievement gap in mathematics has to be attacked at the earliest point in a student's development," McClure said. "I know from my own experience that mathematics has to be taught with rigor and

in a way that connects with the student. The student has to have a real tough mathematics regimen on a daily basis and even in the summer." The same is true for teachers and support staff, McClure added.

Student improvement will be measured in pre and post testing, officials said. "If the student masters mathematics at an early age, he will master science and other disciplines," McClure said. "He will develop his critical thinking capabilities. With that he'll become a better student and scholar in every aspect."

Other HBCU's participating include - LeMoyne Owen College, Knoxville College, Fisk

University and Tennessee State University. The colleges will provide faculty members for the leadership team while campus officials will receive and monitor funds and sites for Saturday math workshops.