

ULM teams with Cypress Point Elementary

Project SOAR places teacher candidates in classrooms

By Barbara Leader • bleader@thenewsstar.com • February 14, 2010

Lessons taught in several classrooms at Cypress Point Elementary are benefitting not only the elementary students, but University of Louisiana at Monroe students as well.

The Project SOAR program, which places teacher candidates in elementary school classrooms to work with students, is designed to positively affect the lives of ULM teacher candidates as well as elementary students and their parents.

The idea, the brainchild of Cypress Point principal Ann Cook and ULM Professional Development School Coordinator Lynn Clark, grew from a National Association for Professional Development Schools conference in New Orleans.

James Cofer, ULM president, on Thursday commended Cypress Point and ULM's College of Education for creating a positive learning environment for elementary and college students.

"We strongly believe in the power of working together to effect change," Cofer said at Cypress Point. "While gaining invaluable real-world experience, these future teachers are contributing to an initiative that addresses the literacy needs of our children."

SOAR, which stands for shared decision-making, ongoing and equal partnerships, assessment-based interventions and reciprocity of resources, has ULM teacher candidates on campus at the elementary school for their college classes in early and intermediate literacy. After class, the students move down the halls to elementary school classrooms to apply their techniques.

In small groups, mostly four students to one teacher candidate, students receive specialized instruction.

"What are we going to do next?" second-grader

Haley Hearn asked.

"We can do the vocabulary words," teacher candidate Jada Smith said as she transitioned her group from one activity to another.

At another table, teacher candidate Cassidy Spears played a reading game with her group.

The word game has students rolling dice, selecting cards denoted on a game board by the number and reading aloud. A correct reading allows students to keep the card. "I've got nine, but I'll have 10," Quadre Tippit said, stacking his reading cards.

The program includes about 120 teacher candidates and 60 elementary students for 30 to 45 minutes per week. "The ongoing rotation allows teacher candidates to see how their efforts are impacting students over the course of several semesters," Clark said. "This brings validity and invaluable insight to the teacher candidates and the program."

ULM teacher candidates prepare weekly lessons based on a review of student test scores, including iLEAP, dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills scores and Cypress Point teachers' assessment of student achievement needs.

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