

Morrilton High School on the Leading Edge of Innovation



South Conway County School District and Morrilton High School are once again on the “leading edge of innovation” according to Matt Dozier, President/CEO of EAST Initiative. Morrilton High School has been named 1 of just 5 schools in the state to receive the newly announced EAST Core grant. EAST Core is a pilot program funded by the Arkansas Department of Education that expands upon the traditional EAST

model by using best practices to expand the nationally recognized EAST methods into the core subjects classroom. Dondi Jackson, Senior Director of Curricular Integration of EAST Core, states “This approach to innovation in education is unique and holds significant promise for moving our schools forward in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) priorities, community engagement, project-based learning and communications; all with a customized approach. When the announcement of pilot grant availability was made this past summer, response to our program was significant and enthusiastic. Our team traveled across the state to meet with administrators, faculty and staff from both small and large school districts.” Morrilton High School’s proven track record of excellence and the piloting of the first EAST program helped make the selection even possible..

EAST Core provides assistance for teachers working with students to develop cross-curricular projects. These projects allow students to find meaning in two or more courses by developing and/or solving problems related to the subjects they are studying and what holds importance to them. A Coordinated Learning Center (CLC) is at the heart of the EAST Core initiative. Beth Stewart, assistant superintendent stated, “One of the most exciting things about this grant is the amount of technology that is included for students. Not only will the grant supply both PC and Mac computers, iPads and presentation equipment, but students will also be able to access audio and video editing equipment, 2D and 3D drafting/modeling and visualization, global imaging systems (GIS), graphics, and animation software. This by no means is a complete list of equipment that students will be able to access.” In addition to technology, partnerships with multiple Arkansas

university researchers as well as the Center for Advanced Spatial Technologies will allow students a wider view of possible job opportunities upon graduation. Dr. Annette Henderson stated “We are extremely excited about this opportunity for our teachers and students and feel that it fits perfectly not only with Common Core but also with input from our community. Discussions from recent district mission meetings indicated that our patrons want our graduates to have skills that allow them to be contributing members of our community. This program while focusing on academics give students an opportunity to give back to the community they live in. One aspect of EAST Core is the web portal that will be accessible not only for teachers, students, and even universities but the community as well. This web portal will be a place that our community can access and communicate by being able to provide project suggestions, or assistance. This type of process will bring a totally new aspect to collaborative learning.” EAST Core training will begin in May and take place throughout the summer which will allow students to access the program for the 2012-2013 school year.