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Winthrop Receives U.S. Department of Education Grant to Total Nearly \$3 Million

Winthrop University

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Winthrop Receives U.S. Department of Education Grant to Total Nearly \$3 Million

Quick Facts

- Richard W. Riley College of Education has been awarded a U.S. Department of Education grant to focus on English language acquisition.
- The grant provides close to \$550,000 in funding each year for five years, totaling nearly \$3 million.
- Winthrop was one of only 49 institutions out of 337 applicants nationwide to receive the grant.



Lisa Johnson

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – Winthrop University's **Richard W. Riley College of Education** has been awarded a **U.S. Department of Education grant to focus on English language acquisition**. The grant provides close to **\$550,000 in funding each year for five years, totaling nearly \$3 million**. Winthrop was **one of only 49 institutions out of 337 applicants nationwide** and the only South Carolina institution to receive the grant.

The new initiative, entitled **NExT LEVEL: NETwork for Leading Education that Values English Learners**, will continue to build off a 2007 Winthrop grant entitled Teaching Teachers WELL that also focused on English Learners (ELs).



Kelly Costner

For the new grant, Winthrop will partner with the **Lancaster County School District, York School District 3 and York School District 4**, which have experienced dramatic increases in English Learner populations.

"South Carolina as a state has seen a 150 percent average increase in English Learners," said **Lisa Johnson**, co-principal investigator of the grant and director of Winthrop's **Jim and Sue Rex Institute for Educational Renewal and Partnerships**. "This increase is occurring so fast that institutions and schools struggle with preparation to meet the unique needs of second language learners and their families. We received feedback from our partner schools that this is a significant need and an area in which teachers are asking for support."

The grant's ultimate goal, according to Johnson, is to **provide a high quality education for every student**.

The grant will utilize the established Winthrop University-School Partnership Network to provide systemic and embedded professional learning opportunities to teachers, administrators, parents and faculty to meet identified needs of English Learners.

Kelly Costner, co-principal investigator of the grant and coordinator of middle level education, said that the grant will prepare current teachers to better address the needs of English Learners in their classrooms and will assist them with getting content across to students when language is a barrier. He and colleague **Elke Schneider**, co-author of NExT LEVEL, have worked together to support teachers in these efforts since their collaboration on the 2007 Teaching Teachers WELL project.

NExT LEVEL is a natural next step that **will fund graduate course work for teachers** who want to pursue certification for teaching ELs; it will **support Winthrop's educator preparation faculty with**

professional development allowing them to learn and develop new EL skills; and it will **allow current Winthrop teacher candidates to take advanced course work focusing on ELs.**

The grant also will help districts **implement a six-week Parent Institute** in their schools. “Teachers and administrators share that they are challenged by the parent component of educating English Learners,” said Johnson. “How do you engage, how do you reach out to parents beyond sending home a translated newsletter? The U.S. education system is difficult to navigate even for native speakers who have experienced it since kindergarten; imagine the challenge for those who have not.”

A kick off meeting will be held Oct. 24 to plan for the grant’s implementation.

“We’re appreciative of the support that we have received while pursuing this grant, and we have benefited from the expertise of our school partners and colleagues in the design and content of this project,” said Costner. **“We’re excited about this opportunity as we know it is going to address a significant need in our communities.”**

For more information, please contact **Costner** at costnerk@winthrop.edu or call 803/323-2478.

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