Fall 11-13-2013

College of Education Shares in Riley Award of Excellence with Chester School

Winthrop University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.winthrop.edu/winthropnews2013

Recommended Citation
Winthrop University, "College of Education Shares in Riley Award of Excellence with Chester School" (2013). Winthrop News 2013. 238.
https://digitalcommons.winthrop.edu/winthropnews2013/238

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Winthrop News and Events Archive at Digital Commons @ Winthrop University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Winthrop News 2013 by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Winthrop University. For more information, please contact bramed@winthrop.edu.
College of Education Shares in Riley Award of Excellence with Chester School

ROCK HILL, S.C.—Winthrop University’s successful partnership with a Chester County school was recognized recently with the 2013 Dick and Tunky Riley WhatWorksSCsm Award for Excellence.

The award, which highlights innovative educational initiatives throughout the state, was presented to Chester Park Elementary School of Inquiry for its project-based learning initiative. It was presented during the WhatWorksSC awards luncheon held Oct. 16 in Columbia in conjunction with the South Carolina Future Minds’ annual Public Education Partners meeting.

The Chester school initiative was selected from among two other finalists which serve students statewide: Parents as Teachers SC, South Carolina First Steps; and Teacher Cadet Program, Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA), which is housed at Winthrop.

The Chester school, which is a professional development school in partnership with Winthrop, is a Title I school where 90 percent of the 435 students receive free or reduced lunch. Despite that, in the first year of its project-based learning initiative, the school’s first and second grade classrooms saw significant growth in student learning averaging 84 percent.

Sue Spencer, associate professor in Winthrop’s Department of Counseling, Leadership and Educational Studies, said she has worked with Chester teachers over the past four years to develop a school culture in which students learn content by working in collaborative teams to solve real-world problems.

"I work collaboratively with the teachers to develop and implement at least one project-based learning unit each semester," she said. "Each teacher designs a WebQuest that he or she uses to teach the students how to conduct research online, compile information, work in collaborative teams and think critically. Students then develop presentations that they and teachers present at our annual Friends and Family Math and Science Fair."

For example, kindergarten teachers worked with students to develop a landscaping plan for the new Chester District Education office. As teachers taught students learned new math, science, and reading content within the context of how they would solve this particular problem.

"These types of projects show children how they might one day use the academic skills they are acquiring to become, in this case, a landscaper or horticulturist," Spencer added. "This approach is very different from learning the content for the sole purpose of doing well on a test. It teaches them how to use what they are learning to become productive citizens."
Candidates for the award were selected from more than 80 entries in the Riley Institute’s WhatWorksSC clearinghouse. The WhatWorksSC clearinghouse showcases initiatives that explore and exemplify key strategies for improving South Carolina’s public schools.

The award was presented in conjunction with the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, and was sponsored by Childs and Halligan, P.A., the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee, the South Carolina School Boards Association, the South Carolina State Board of Education, and the South Carolina Association of School Administrators.

For more information about the Chester school initiative, contact Spencer in the Richard W. Riley College of Education at 803/323-2151 or e-mail her at spencers@winthrop.edu.