

PR Award #	U350A110005
Name of Organization	Mississippi State University
Name of Project	Teacher Educators for Rural Middle Schools (TERMS)
City, State	Mississippi State, Mississippi

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Mississippi's rural children and their communities are among the most impoverished in the U.S. and face a staggering array of challenges that make it difficult for school districts to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of high quality teachers. Mississippi State University (MSU), in partnership with the Mississippi State Department of Education, the Mississippi Center for Education Innovation, and a consortium of 20 high-need rural Local Education Agencies, proposes to implement Teacher Education for Rural Middle Schools (TERMS), a recruitment and certification program for the State of Mississippi. This five year program will develop and expand alternate routes to full teacher certification for highly qualified mid-career professionals, recent college graduates who have not majored in education, individuals with emergency certification, and highly qualified paraprofessionals. TERMS builds on the successes of the existing Master of Arts in Teaching Secondary Education (MAT-S) program at MSU, an online degree program that leads to secondary licensure, supported since 2009 by a Transition to Teaching Grant award for the LEAP program (Learning and Educating through Alternate Programs). TERMS' focus on recruiting teachers for middle schools, rather than secondary schools, will help alleviate teacher shortages and increase the quality of teaching in grades 4-8, especially in rural schools in Mississippi, including those in the Delta. The MAT 4-8 will be a 36-credit program leading to a Master of Arts in Teaching for grades 4-8 that incorporates rigorous academic coursework, a classroom internship, and mentoring over a 3-year period. Activities include course work offered via distance learning, summer mini-conferences, nine-month internships in high-need LEAs, professional development offered regionally throughout the school year, and continuous participation in a web-delivered community of practice. The program incorporates rigorous academic coursework based on both NCATE (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) and NMSA (National Middle School Association) standards for teacher education. By gradually increasing its cohort size each year (beginning with 20 in the first implementation year, 30 in the following year, 35 in the subsequent year, and 40 in the final year), the project aims to recruit and support 125 newly qualified middle school teachers through its four project goals: Goal 1) to develop a high quality and self-sustaining, state-approved alternate route middle school MAT degree program; Goal 2) to recruit 125 high quality, non-traditional candidates for teaching and place them in high-need, rural LEAs; Goal 3) to increase retention of these teachers through a support system of sustained mentoring to participants and professional assistance to high-need LEA partners; and Goal 4) to conduct and disseminate research in that evaluates the effectiveness of TERMS and contributes to efforts to increase numbers of high-quality teachers for rural middle schools.