

J. Graham Brown Foundation grant to fund parent leadership institute with a STEM focus

LEXINGTON, KY - A \$275,000 grant from the James Graham Brown Foundation to the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence will fund creation and implementation over two years of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

The special institute will be conducted in the fall of 2009 and 2010 to provide leadership training and support to parents to help them become advocates for improved science and math education in their schools and communities. The program is a joint project of the Prichard Committee and the Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science and The Center for Gifted Studies at Western Kentucky University.

The Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership at the Prichard Committee has received national recognition for the training program that began in 1997. Since then, about 1,500 parents have participated in six days of intense instruction to gain the knowledge and skills they need to become leaders in school improvement.

"This parent leadership program will recruit, train and support a cadre of parents who will promote improved math, science and technology instruction and higher expectations in their schools," said Mason Rummel, Executive Director of the James Graham Brown Foundation.

The Commonwealth Institute's curriculum focuses on leadership skills, planning and strategic development as well as elements of Kentucky's education and accountability systems. After completing the institute, parents work with educators and other parents on projects targeting specific areas of student achievement. Projects in this institute will focus on opportunities to increase student achievement in science and mathematics in the participants' schools and districts.

"This J. Graham Brown Foundation grant allows us to offer an exciting, innovative statewide program for parents," said Bev Raimondo, director of the institute. "It enables a specific focus on math, science, engineering, and technology so parents can understand their importance to high level learning and determine ways to address those areas at their schools."

The Gatton Academy opened its doors the fall of 2007 as a residential program for advanced high school juniors and seniors interested in careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. With its opening, Kentucky becomes the 14th state to have such a school supported by the state legislature. The Center for Gifted Studies at WKU has provided opportunities for young people who are gifted and talented, their educators, and their parents for more than 25 years.

"This grant will increase interest in challenging learning opportunities in math and science across the Commonwealth," noted Dr. Julia Roberts, executive director of The Center for Gifted Studies and the Gatton Academy. "These content areas are critical for creating a bright future for our state and nation."

Interested Kentucky public school parents may contact Lou Ann Ramos at the Prichard Committee at lramos@prichardcommittee.org or apply online at www.cipl.org. Applications are due April 15, 2009.

The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence is a nonprofit citizens' organization that works to improve education for all Kentuckians.