Project VISIONS (Orgill/Deniz)

Project VISIONS (Venture Into Scientific Inquiry Organized around Nevada Standards) is a professional development project that will increase science and mathematics achievement for elementary students in the Clark County School District. Partners included in the project are the Clark County School District (CCSD) and the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) Center for Mathematics and Science Education. Research-based professional development will increase teacher content knowledge and instill inquiry-based pedagogical practices that aide science and mathematics instruction through reflective processes. In addition, collaboration between elementary teachers and high school science teachers will be established to deliver a consistent and articulate curriculum aligned to state standards. VISIONS will develop high school and elementary school teams that will provide on-going professional development in science content knowledge and Full Option Science System (FOSS) district-wide.

The mission of VISIONS is to improve science/mathematical content knowledge of elementary school teachers and increase the effectiveness of classroom instruction, thus resulting in increased student achievement in science and mathematics. Project VISIONS will target schools that are in need of improvement as specified by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and have a high percentage of teachers who do not have highly qualified status.

Following are the goals of Project VISIONS:

- Goal I: VISIONS will develop a cadre of site-based teacher leaders.
- Goal II: VISIONS teachers will increase science and mathematics content knowledge.
- Goal III: Academic achievement will increase for students exposed to VISIONS teachers.

The professional development model for Project VISIONS will consist of two principal annual components: a summer institute and graduate coursework. The summer institute will focus on developing teacher content knowledge while the academic year of graduate coursework will focus on educating the participants on inquiry based pedagogical practices. During the academic year, the emphasis of Project VISIONS will shift from science and mathematics content to a focus on gaining a deeper understanding of scientific inquiry from the perspectives of the nature of science, theories of conceptual change, and self-regulated learning (Schraw, Crippen, & Hartley, 2006; Zimmerman & Kovach, 2003).