MathScience Innovation Center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONFERENCE STRESSES NEED FOR ENGINEERS

43 Middle and High School Teachers from the Metro Richmond Area Worked to Augment Engineering Education While Adhering to SOLs

"Engineers are the most dependable and reliable people you can meet," began Chris Lundberg, former Program Coordinator of the MathScience Innovation Center, as he addressed 40 middle and high school math and science teachers from the Metro Richmond area at the “Teaching Scientific Applications through 21st Century Engineering” Conference last week, hosted by the MathScience Innovation Center.

There is a global talent war according to Dr. Julia Cothron, Executive Director of the MathScience Innovation Center, and for the United States to compete engineering must be further incorporated into the sciences. In the strategic plan that looks forward to 2015, the MathScience Innovation Center is currently developing a series of conferences to influence education in Virginia in several booming fields, such as nanotechnology, fractal geometry and engineering.

The engineering conference worked to teach educators how to relate engineering fundamentals to not only the Virginia Standards of Learning, but how to guide and engage potential engineers into a career in the field. Mike Matthews, P.E., the President and CEO of Hankins and Anderson Consulting Engineers, stressed that an engineering career is good for the country, the economy and the student. What you can do, he told the teachers, is to learn what it is engineers do and understand the demand for engineers.

In addition to Matthews, other leading voices in the field spoke in individual sessions, including Jim Batterson, a retired NASA research engineer, and Dr. Russ Jamison, the Dean of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Engineering. Attendees also learned about current trends within the field and

participated in interdisciplinary lessons from center staff and other teachers, who had previous training from the center.

Anne Hampton, a sixth grade science teacher at Harry F. Byrd Middle School in Henrico County, said that she would definitely add these experiments to her curriculum. “Our county is pressing hard to go into the 21st century… it appealed to me that way.” Hampton also liked that the lessons were hands-on, simple, cheap, easy, and didn’t require a lot of materials to perform. “We’re trying to open their eyes to how this relates to the real world,” and these experiments relate hard-to-understand concepts to the kids better, she said.

Attendees participated in several of the 22 sessions offered at the campus, which ranged from possible classroom projects, such as creating a speaker with a paper cup, to virtual field trips. Those field trips, a specific focus of the Center’s new curriculum, bring the field trip and a variety of developed lesson plans to the classroom, saving money and time without losing the educational experience. Established trips include the National Museum of the Marine Corps, highway sound barriers and the environmentally-friendly New Kent Rest Area.

The MathScience Innovation Center is a 42-year-old nonprofit organization dedicated to futuristic math and science education for K-12 teachers and students. Formed in 1966 as the Mathematic & Science Center, the organization was recently renamed as part of its expanded leadership role, including trend analysis, professional development of educations, innovative student programs and advocacy of futuristic programs. Its 2015 Vision focuses on implementing new programs in engineering, fractal geometry, nanotechnology, environmental modeling and distance learning. The MathScience Innovation Center is comprised of eight school divisions: Chesterfield, Colonial Heights, Hanover, Henrico, King William, Petersburg, Powhatan and Richmond. Other divisions also participate through abbreviated memberships: Charles City, Hopewell, Prince George, and the Steward School.

Nine teachers attended from Chesterfield County: Benjamin Barnwell from Meadowbrook High School; Anna Butler, Echo Naugle, and Jessica Saunders from Falling Creek Middle School; Leona Dooley and Carolyn Wilkerson from Swift Creek Middle School; Edward Hughes from Chesterfield Community High School; Vincent Hughes from Tomahawk Middle School; and Timothy Winkler from Bailey Bridge Middle School.

Six teachers attended from Hanover County: Jeremy Bartholow and Leslie Deane from Chickahominy Middle School, Marsha Caudill from Liberty Middle School, Eileen Malick and Jeremy Watts from Atlee High School, and Stephanie Moore from Oak Knoll Middle School.

Eight teachers attended from Henrico County: Brent Halstead from Wilder Middle School, Anne Hampton from Byrd Middle School, Christine Hill from Fairfield

Middle School, Suzannette Mays from Tuckahoe Middle School, Jennifer Moore from Adams Elementary School, Kesha Oliver and Carrie Puryear-Wilson from Hermitage High School, and Julie Scott from Henrico High School.

Four teachers attended from Petersburg: Merced Ansay and Elaine Ramos from Peabody Middle School and Phyllis Barnette and Charrie Dacanay from Petersburg High School.

Three teachers attended from Powhatan County: James Dawson, Anne Larrick, and Donia Spott, all from Powhatan Junior High School.

Four teachers attended from Richmond City Public Schools: Deborah Mansour from Henderson Middle School, Steven Pane from Armstrong High School, LaTonya Waller from Lucille Brown Middle School, and Patricia Woodberry from Holton Elementary School.

Two teachers attended from Waynesboro County: Linda Herron and Amanda Whitesell, both from Kate Collins Middle School.

One teacher attended from West Point County: Mohamad Barbarji from West Point High School.

One teacher attended from Benedictine High School, Adria Hogan.

WHAT: 43 middle and high school teachers attended a conference that stressed the importance of engineering education and careers.

WHEN: June 18 – 20, 2008

WHERE: 2401 Hartman Street, Richmond, Va. 23223