

SES08-2008-000235

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the SES08 Meeting of
the American Physical Society

SKyTeach: Addressing the need for Science and Math Teachers in Kentucky¹

SCOTT BONHAM, Western Kentucky University

The shortage of good science and math teachers is a chronic problem that threatens to undermine the future of our profession and economy. While our world is becoming increasingly dependent on technology, many high schools do not even offer physics, in part due to the unavailability of a qualified teacher. The entire state of Kentucky typically produces 0-2 new physics teachers per year, compared to 200+ elementary teachers per year from WKU alone. The picture is not much better in math and other sciences. SKyTeach is a new program at WKU to address this great need and is part of a national effort to replicate the successful UTeach program. The University of Texas UTeach program graduates 70-90 new math and science teachers a year, in the process providing them with a strong preparation based on current research on how people learn science and math, experience teaching in real classrooms from the start, and strong mentoring and support. UTeach graduates stay in the classroom at rates above the national average, and some fairly quickly move into leadership positions within their schools. A key element is good collaboration between the college of science, that of education, local P-12 schools, and others. Last year thirteen universities across the nation were selected as part of an effort to replicate the UTeach program nation-wide. This effort is supported by the National Science and Math Initiative in a partnership with the UTeach Institute. Our first cohort of students has started this fall, and we have had many successes and challenges as we move forward.

¹Supported by the National Math and Science Initiative.