



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

March 6, 2015

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Augmenting Science and Special Educator Teams Academy

I am pleased to announce that the Virginia Department of Education's Office of Science and Health Education and Office of Special Education Instructional Services, in partnership with James Madison University, will again sponsor a collaborative science-inclusion special education institute at the University's summer 2015 Content Teaching Academy (CTA). This exciting and successful program, *Augmenting Science and Special Educator Teams* (ASSET), is designed for science and special educator school teams working together to enhance all student outcomes focusing on improved content understanding, pedagogical strategies, collaboration strategies, and networking. The CTA (and the ASSET program) will run from June 22 - 26, 2015.

Middle and high school science and special educator co-teaching teams working in the disciplines of **physical science**, **Earth science**, and **biology** are the primary audience for this program. The Department is seeking two-member teams from individual middle and high schools. Priority will be given to teachers who teach in schools that have not met the state benchmarks on the Grade 8 Science, Earth Science, or Biology Standards of Learning test.

The intensive five-day program will include discipline area content sessions as well as combined pedagogy sessions with opportunities to model effective instructional strategies and co-teaching practices. Time will be structured on a daily basis to support school team planning and coordination.

Each of the three concurrent, discipline-based ASSET sections is designed to:

- **improve** teacher content knowledge with foundational and cutting-edge science research;
- **expand** teachers understanding of effective special education pedagogy using tangible materials, models, technology, "minds-on" lesson plans, and targeted inquiry methods;
- **enhance** practical experiences with high-quality special teaching resources teachers can integrate into their lesson plans;
- **reinforce** techniques for literacy and vocabulary development among all students; and
- **establish** an electronic network of support and a learning community among participants.

The Virginia Department of Education will assume the cost of registration, graduate tuition (3 hrs.), lodging, and meals for all public school participants accepted into the program. Teachers from schools not meeting the state benchmark for accreditation in science will be given priority. School divisions are strongly encouraged to cover travel expenses for division participants as this cost is not assumed by the Department; however, this is not a requirement of the program.

For more detailed information regarding this program and how to register, please visit the CTA Web site at <http://www.jmu.edu/contentacademy/>. If you have additional questions about the program, please contact Eric Rhoades, director, Office of Science and Health Education, by e-mail at Eric.Rhoades@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 786-2481; or Dr. Teresa Lee, instructional specialist, Office of Special Education and Instructional Services, at Teresa.Lee@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 371-8283.

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