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## **UT receives \$10 million grant to improve science education for young children**

Nurturing a young child's natural curiosity and developing an interest in discovery and science is important, but often overlooked in early childhood education.

The new NURTURES program led by The University of Toledo will transform the way preschool through third grade science is taught in the greater Toledo area by engaging the young students, their teachers and their parents.

UT and its numerous community partners will celebrate the beginning of the NURTURES program and the \$10 million grant recently received from the National Science Foundation to fund it during a press conference at 2:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 18 at Apple Tree Nursery School located in the UT Childcare Center on Main Campus.

"Children are naturally curious and always want to know why or what if. We need to nurture that curiosity and encourage them to ask questions and explore. That is what science is," said Dr. Charlene Czerniak, professor of curriculum and instruction at The University of Toledo and the lead investigator on the research project. "This program engages the students, teachers, parents and the community in a comprehensive model to make science education a priority for young people so they will continue to study science and later pursue scientific careers."

NURTURES, which stands for Networking Urban Resources with Teachers and University enRich Early Childhood Science, is a partnership led by the UT Judith Herb College of Education, Health Science and Human Service and UT College of Engineering, in collaboration with Toledo Public Schools, area nursery schools and day cares, and other science and community organizations.

The program will begin Apple Tree Nursery School, a few Toledo Public Schools buildings, and a local Head Start provider and then expand to include more teachers and educational environments.

"Apple Tree has a long history of working with University faculty to better understand and support children's learning and we are happy to be a pilot site for the NURTURES program to help science come alive to our students," Director Sherry Roush said.

"The goals of NURTURES are entirely in line with initiatives at Toledo Public Schools to improve science education along with math and reading," TPS Superintendent Dr. Jerome Pecko said. "The mix of teacher education, parent involvement and community events is a complete package to engage children's interest in the world of science."

During the course of the five-year project students, parents and teachers all will gain valuable information to improve the interest and achievement in science for about 11,000 students in the greater Toledo area.

Summer institutes will provide the professional development needed for science educators to develop challenging inquiry-based, age appropriate science instruction that also integrates reading and math. The training will reach a total of 495 teachers, principals and directors in at least 50 community-based early care and education programs and 300 K-3 classrooms.

Teachers will learn skills to help engage families in formal and informal education, which also will be supported with seven annual community science events that will reach about 10,000 families during the course of the project through partners such as the Toledo Zoo and Imagination Station.

Young children have been largely ignored in many science education reform efforts, Czerniak said, and the hope is that NURTURES will be able to provide information on the approaches that incorporate the best creative and innovative strategies for learning.

The partners in NURTURES are: Toledo Public Schools, Apple Tree Nursery School, the East Toledo Family Center Day Care, the Toledo Day Nursery, Olivet Nursery, Fairgreen Nursery, the Toledo Catholic Schools, UT Ritter Planetarium, Imagination Station, Toledo Zoo, Toledo Metroparks, Toledo Botanical Gardens, Toledo Grows, Lourdes College Nature Laboratory, Challenger Learning Center, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Lucas County Library, and WGTE Public Media.

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