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## **\$3 Million Grant to Provide Pre-K Prep for Mississippi Educators**

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## \$3 Million Grant to Provide Pre-K Prep for Mississippi Educators

**Consortium, UM prepare 'bundle' of strategies for teachers, administrators**

 FEBRUARY 14, 2017 BY [ANDREW M. ABERNATHY](#)



OXFORD, Miss. – A three-year, \$3 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation will help **University of Mississippi** faculty provide educators across the state with specialized training to use new research and meet upcoming training demands facing the early childhood education workforce.

The funds will be awarded in \$1 million increments over the next three years to the **North Mississippi Education Consortium**, or NMEC, which is housed on the university's Oxford campus and will host a variety of training opportunities with faculty support from the UM **Graduate Center for the Study of Early Learning**.

"We are creating a system of training to build certain capacities in school districts," said Cathy Grace, the Graduate Center's co-director. "Different training opportunities will allow both teachers and principals to get information that is appropriate to their role. We also want to inform teachers of what will be expected of them by the state as it changes its requirements and evaluations."

Starting in 2018, the **Mississippi Department of Education** will require all the state's public school teachers to hold a special license endorsement to teach in any public early childhood classroom. Training opportunities to be provided with the new funding will provide multiple options for teachers to meet this requirement.

Grace describes the initiative as a "bundle of strategies," with the aim of supporting high-quality pre-K classrooms. The focus will be exposing both teachers and administrators to the latest research in neuroscience and professional practice related to the rapidly evolving field of early childhood education.

The training programs planned in conjunction with MDE will benefit assistant teachers, teachers, principals and school superintendents working with pre-kindergarten students. These opportunities, scheduled in various locations across the state over the next three years, can train hundreds of early childhood teachers and school administrators on the most effective teaching practices for young children.

Online staff development courses designed for teachers seeking to receive their pre-K endorsement will also be offered. Interested individuals are encouraged to contact NMEC or visit the **Graduate Center** website to get specific training information.

These opportunities will utilize state resources, as well as bring in national experts in early childhood education and school administration, and will be based on proven strategies that have yielded increased student outcomes and engaged families in communities.

According to the **National Institute for Early Education Research**, several studies show that quality preschool programs can produce lasting gains in academic achievement, including gains in reading and mathematics. The studies also indicate that every \$1 invested in public pre-K education generates a \$7 return in the form of long-term cost savings.

The School of Education also offers two programs that can help teachers earn a pre-K license endorsement from MDE, including its online **Master of Education degree in early childhood education**, as well as 12-hour undergraduate endorsement program.

"We, at the North Mississippi Education Consortium, are excited to be a part of this grant opportunity," said Susan Scott, program coordinator at NMEC. "As educators, we see the value of early childhood education and the impact it has on the educational achievement of Mississippi's children."

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