

College of Education

In-Service Education Center
Alabama Science in Motion
Technology in Motion
Alabama Reading Initiative
Alabama Reading First Initiative

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA
E D U C A T I O N

October 25, 2006

Dear Sir/Madame:

As Director of The University of Alabama Regional In-Service Education Center, I am writing this letter in support of the proposal, *Science Teaching through Astronomical Research (STAR)*, for K-12 Schools via the Southern STAR Telescope.

The goal of our In-Service Center is to provide quality professional development to K-12 teachers that results in improved student achievement. Both research and our experience prove that offering one-time workshops to teachers is insufficient to bring about change in their instructional practices, much less improved student achievement.

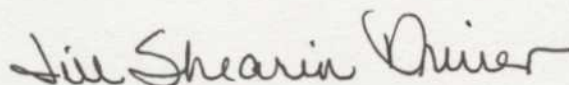
This is especially true in the case of science instruction where many teachers in our region, particularly at the elementary and middle school levels, are woefully under-prepared to teach science; both the way they were taught science (lectures, memorization of facts, etc.) and the minimal number of science courses they take as undergraduates contribute to this dilemma. At the high school level, science teachers are least prepared to teach physical science concepts (as compared to biological or chemical science concepts); moreover, rarely, if ever, have many of them taken astronomy. At no level in K-12 are teachers in our region currently positioned to interest, motivate, or teach students in science through the use of astronomy, telescopes, and the other technology described in the STAR proposal.

Through the opportunity to participate in the proposal's on-going research projects, teachers will be more likely to implement in their classrooms the training they receive in astronomical observations. Research in effective professional development for teachers clearly shows that we must build in collegial work and opportunities on the mastery and use of innovative practices and content. Such opportunities contribute not only to the individual competence of participating educators, but also build their sense of membership in a profession (Joyce and Showers, 2002).

The University of Alabama Regional In-Service Center supports the STAR proposal and acknowledges two particular strengths from the perspective of teacher professional development: (1) it will contribute to filling the desperate need for improved teacher quality in K-12 in the area of science, in particular, the physical sciences, and (2) it will create a structure through which participating teachers can engage in ongoing, collegial opportunities to master science content and practices--thereby dramatically increasing the likelihood that the content of the training will be transferred to classroom instructional practices.

As a provider of professional development to the K-12 schools targeted in this proposal, The University of Alabama Regional In-Service Center is committed to supporting the STAR program.

Sincerely,



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