



# MathScience Innovation Center

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## **MSiC Faculty Attend ISTE Conference in San Antonio** Programs used to enhance Center's distance learning

Five MathScience Innovation Center faculty members traveled to the Wild West during the last week of June in order to find new ways to improve the Center's distance learning programs.

Educators Gayle Bynum, Cheri Kelleher, Becky Pittman, and Joyce Watson and the Center's Coordinator of Distance Learning, Dr. Echol Marshall, attended the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) National Educational Computing Conference (NECC) in San Antonio, Texas in order to find "new ways to use tools that we already have, like Moodle, like Elluminate, like video conferencing," Marshall said.

NECC offers hundreds of programs and close to a thousand corporate exhibits during five day that focus on school improvement, technology infrastructure, professional learning, 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning, distance learning, and ethics and equity, according to this year's program guide. The Center faculty, however, focused on programs related to distance learning, which is also referred to as virtual schooling and e-learning.

Distance learning offers the opportunity for the quality of a classroom lesson to be delivered at a time and place that is efficient for the student, explained Marshall. The key, however, is to capture students' attention, and these four teachers are currently developing pilot lessons to accomplish this. The Center plans to start implementing student lessons in the fall of 2008.

The distance learning program is "committed to delivering high-quality, just-in-time, [and] weekday lessons to [grade] 6-12 students through distance learning techniques and delivery devices such as Elluminate Live! and Moodle." Marshall says that, while the Center utilizes both of those devices, the struggle is to use these tools so that they enhance each other.

What also struck Marshall about the conference is how new ideas and skills must be handled. While a teacher can easily assign a math test, assessing those skills isn't as easy or clear. "There is an almost desperate need to be able to measure [21<sup>st</sup> century] skills."

The MathScience Innovation Center is a 42-year-old organization dedicated to futuristic math and science education for K-12 teachers and students. Its vision for 2015 focuses on implementing new programs in fractal geometry, engineering, nanotechnology, environmental modeling, and distance learning. The MathScience Innovation Center is an educational consortium comprised of eight school divisions: Chesterfield, Colonial Heights, Hanover, Henrico, King William, Petersburg, Powhatan, and Richmond. Other divisions also participate through abbreviated memberships: Charles City, Hopewell, Prince George, and the Steward School.