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Texas Schools Project Evaluates Engineering Curriculum
Scope includes more than 25 school districts

Richardson, Texas (Sept. 30, 2009) – Texas Schools Project (TSP), located at The University of Texas at Dallas School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences, has been asked to analyze the effect of a high-tech engineering curriculum developed by The Infinity Project at the Lyle School of Engineering at Southern Methodist University, on Texas high school students' academic achievement.

TSP's evaluation is taking place in two phases. Phase One consists of accessing data from The University of Texas at Dallas Education Research Center about students who participate in The Infinity Project to produce a preliminary report of descriptive statistics. Phase Two incorporates this data into an analysis of the program to examine the relationship between the curriculum and student academic achievement. Achievement is being measured by TAKS scores (science and math), on-time grade-to-grade promotions, and high school completion. This evaluation also lays the groundwork for future analysis of the program's impact on college outcomes and beyond.

"Our evaluation of The Infinity Project's engineering curriculum comes just at the right time to benefit students and districts alike," said Dr. Kristin Kuhne, manager of the newly formed evaluation unit at TSP. "The Infinity Project engineering curriculum is uniquely positioned to be considered as a science credit under new requirements for Texas incoming high school freshmen to take four science credits in order to graduate."

The Infinity Project was developed in 1999 by the Caruth Institute for Engineering Education at SMU and Texas Instruments (TI), working in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, the National Science Foundation and others, to close the gap between the number of engineering graduates produced in the U.S. and the growing need for students trained in the field.

"It is of utmost importance that students be well equipped to compete in a globally competitive 21st century. This study will help us evaluate the effect our curriculum is having on these students," said Torrence Robinson, TI director of public affairs and co-founder of The Infinity Project.

For the next generation of high school graduates to be more competitive in the world of technology, The Infinity Project founders felt steps needed to be taken to encourage more young students to pursue engineering. Robinson said, "Math and science are areas in which Texas and U.S. students have fallen behind. The Infinity curriculum focuses on relevance and provides motivation for students to persevere through fundamental math courses that they need to be successful."

"Engineering is at the heart of all of the modern conveniences most teenagers take for granted - wireless phones, compact discs, cars, computers and more. Unfortunately, far too many students don't see the connection between the math and science they learn in school and the way that engineers imagine, create and build new products that improve our world," said Dr. Geoffrey Orsak, dean of SMU's Lyle School of Engineering and co-founder of The Infinity Project. "The Infinity Project brings it all together in a simple-to-use and highly effective year-long program that creates excitement, challenge and enthusiasm for engineering among students."

The evaluation, which includes high schools from more than 25 school districts throughout Texas, is scheduled to be completed by year-end.

For more information on The Infinity Project, visit the website at www.infinity-project.org.

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