

Research project aims to reduce achievement gaps

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One University of Wisconsin Oshkosh professor's research gained international attention earlier this year at the National Association for Research in Science Teaching's (NARST) annual conference.

Michael Beeth, associate professor in the curriculum and instruction department, presented the results of 10 years of research on the systematic reform of science and mathematics education March 30 to April 2 in Baltimore.

"The goal was to reduce achievement gaps between males and females, minorities and white students and students living in low socioeconomic communities," said Beeth of the presentation, "Systematic Reform of Science and Mathematics Education: Results from a Decade of Collaborative Efforts in Ohio."

Working with Terry McCollum of Miami University's School of Health, Education and Society, Beeth found that changing the instructional practices of large numbers of teachers was relatively straightforward and that the changes could lead to achievement gains for all students.

"The work supports the notion that to improve K-12 student achievement, you need a systemic approach to working with teachers — that is, an approach that involves all of the stakeholders in the education of a teacher — from K-16 and into their continuing professional development experiences," said Beeth, who has taught at UW Oshkosh for five years.

"We also found out that maintaining the impacts of these gains required us to work with the administrator, principals or department chairs who evaluated teaching performances so that they knew how to assess and support the new instructional practices," he said. NARST is the world's largest organization of science education researchers. Beeth and McCollum's presentation was part of focused panel, which also included contributions from researchers from Austria, Australia and Germany.

"Acceptance of a paper for presentation means not only that your work is recognized as quality scholarship, but also that your work should be of interest to an international audience," Beeth said.

Beeth has attended NARST's annual conference since 1992 and has presented at most of them.

- For more information about NARST, visit www.narst.org.