

Story by Caitlin Churchill

# School's ~~out~~ for summer

*It's been said there are three good reasons to be a teacher: June, July, and August. But, this summer a group of science teachers aren't straying from their work in the classroom.*

Teachers become students at the 2009 Summer Science Teacher Academies, two-day programs sponsored by Junior Master Gardner (JMG) that provide training in core science content for elementary and junior high teachers.

A basic academy will be June 23-25, and this year's first water-intensive academy will be June 1-3. Both will be presented at the Texas 4-H Conference Center on Lake Brownwood.

The academies are designed to empower teachers' confidence in relaying scientific knowledge to their students, said National JMG Coordinator Lisa Whittlesey.

The basic academy, which 34 teachers attended last year, covers such topics as 4-H science, engineering, and technology curricula; global positioning systems for classrooms; plant and garden science; aquatic biology; and entomology.


Water education and rainwater harvesting were also included in the basic curriculum last summer, but Whittlesey said these topics have been expanded to create a separate Water Academy that includes lessons on watersheds, water systems, properties of water, Earth-Kind

principles to conserve landscape water use, and water movement through soil.

"Topics will be covered in a very hands-on manner, and teachers will leave with practical science experiments and activities that can be done in the classroom," Whittlesey said. Experiments planned for the Water Academy include building a rainwater collection system; building a drip irrigation system for a garden; and collecting macro-invertebrates, vertebrates, and vegetation.

Whittlesey hopes the Water Academy will encourage teachers to educate their students about saving water resources in their own communities, while providing knowledge of local aquifers, watersheds, rivers, and streams. "High quality water is a critical issue in many communities and also a topic covered in many of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills tests (TEKS) for public schools, particularly in science," she said.

The Summer Science Teacher Academies were developed by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and promoted through the Texas Education Agency science coalition, Regional Texas Education Service Centers, and county Extension program offices.

Registration for the 2009 Summer Science Teacher Academies is limited and is available through the Junior Master Gardner Web site at [www.jmgkids.us/texas](http://www.jmgkids.us/texas). 



1. Sunset over Lake Brownwood.

2. Dr. Clay Robinson introduces teachers to soil profiles by determining the different texture of soils.

3. Students learn about collecting water from roof surface areas and various types of rainwater harvesting collection devices.

4. Texas AgriLife Extension specialist Larry Hysmith instructs students on how to collect water samples and aquatic life from Lake Brownwood.

Photos by Megan Meier.

