

## **Innovative Online Learning Spreads Across Mississippi: Mississippi Virtual Public School Joins The NROC Network**

MONTEREY, Calif., December 3, 2008 –Interactive simulations, flash objects and iPod downloads may not sound like part of a US history or calculus class, but through Mississippi Virtual Public School's (MVPS) supporting membership in the National Repository of Online Courses (NROC), teachers across the state can now use these and other innovative teaching tools to help their students learn.

Selected as the best of their kind, the top-notch online courses in NROC's library feature a vast array of digital media designed to bring learning to a new level and provide educators with superior teaching materials that give students different ways to approach coursework, both online and in traditional classrooms.

"We can customize NROC courses to fit our needs by using only the components that work best for our students. The multimedia platform allows us to address different learning styles," said MVPS director Connie Ratcliffe.

Online classes serve a broad spectrum of students by providing increased access to core curriculum, elective and advanced placement coursework, as well as greater flexibility in scheduling. Additionally, each course is designed to align with popular textbooks and state standards.

During upcoming months MVPS will introduce NROC materials to Mississippi teachers. A special website is available, so Mississippi students and educators can start accessing NROC courses now, at [www.hippocampus.org/myHippo/?user=myMVPS](http://www.hippocampus.org/myHippo/?user=myMVPS) .

MVPS math teacher Tamara Billingsley is already incorporating NROC content into her classes. "NROC makes it easy for me as a teacher because it works with our current online interface, so my students don't have to leave the learning environment they're used too. They spend time on the coursework and not a new system," she said.

Students benefit from the NROC content. "I bookmark things to match each week's lesson. If they are having a problem with something they can go to the Hippocampus site for our class and get another take on the material. It's very straightforward and entertaining. It's not the same old stuff. It really puts a fresh perspective on things," said Billingsley.

Collaboration among NROC Network members adds a unique dimension to online course development. Educators, administrators, technologists and designers from around the globe use the NROC Network to combine their skills and experience to develop and refine existing course materials and forge new content in a process called "social authoring".

This collaborative method, within a non-profit structure, creates high-quality courses for a very reasonable cost, according to Gary Lopez, executive director of the Monterey Institute for

Technology and Education (MITE), the organization that launched NROC. He said this is valuable “because it frees up resources for other infrastructural needs in educational systems, and because it’s supported by a community of educators – scholarship is back in the hands of scholars.”

NROC is an open educational resource (OER) project of the Monterey Institute for Technology and Education, supported by a grant from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The OER movement is fueled by the belief that everyone is entitled to an education no matter where they live or what their circumstances are. By joining NROC, educational institutions support OER and receive a variety of benefits including customizable content, specialized support and professional development resources. NROC’s content is also accessible to individual learners free of charge at [www.hippocampus.org](http://www.hippocampus.org).

**Mississippi Virtual Public School (MVPS)** is a web-based educational service offered by the Mississippi Department of Education to provide Mississippi students and educators with access to a wider range of course work, with more flexibility in scheduling, and with the opportunity to develop capacities as independent learners. MVPS is a tool that is “bringing education to the fingertips of Mississippi students.” It makes all kinds of learning experiences accessible to all students. [www.mvs.mde.k12.ms.us](http://www.mvs.mde.k12.ms.us).

**The Monterey Institute for Technology and Education** is a non-profit educational organization committed to helping meet society’s need for access to effective, high-quality educational opportunities in an era of rapid economic, social and personal change. The Monterey Institute for Technology and Education was founded in 2003 as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Learn more at [www.montereyinstitute.org/nroc](http://www.montereyinstitute.org/nroc).

#### **Organization Contact**

Gary Lopez, Ph.D., Executive Director  
Monterey Institute for Technology and Education  
(831) 642-9459  
[glopez@montereyinstitute.org](mailto:glopez@montereyinstitute.org)  
[www.montereyinstitute.org](http://www.montereyinstitute.org)  
[www.hippocampus.org](http://www.hippocampus.org)