Local teacher chosen for scholars program

Bellingrath Middle School teacher Linda Williams will travel to Chicago this summer to study African-American history as a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Scholar.

Williams is one of 25 NEH scholars picked from a national pool of applicants. She will attend the “HistoryMakers’ 2012 NEH Summer Institute on African American Political History: From Reconstruction to the Present” beginning in July. The program will cover her travel, study and living expenses.

“I’m just so excited about going,” Williams said, adding she’s ready to get into the archives she’ll have access to and learn about different people.

Participants will be trained in the disciplines of oral history and have access to primary source material from the HistoryMakers’ digital archives and website. The goal is for scholars to become “master teachers” who develop an innovative curriculum on African-American political history for use in their classrooms.

According to the HistoryMakers website, the group is a nonprofit that is working to preserve an archival collection of thousands of African-American video and oral histories.

Williams said she applied for the program and had to complete an essay about why she wanted to attend and how she could use the materials in her classroom. The Bellingrath history and English teacher said she’s excited to learn and ready to bring back information to share with her colleagues.

“It’s a rigorous program where I’ll be in school daily,” she said. “Once we get history from professors, we have to go back and present to the class what we got from it.”

She said she will be tasked with making lesson plans and crafting a portfolio. When she returns to Montgomery she will teach local teachers about what she’s learned and how to incorporate that knowledge into lessons.

Williams said she’s looking forward to the change of pace where she’ll be the student instead of the teacher. She said educators always have hunger to learn more.
"We are forever learners," she said. "We are lifelong learners."