



Improving Teacher Quality Program: Current Grants and Upcoming Activities

Several hundred teachers and thousands of students are benefiting from professional development projects that operate all over California under the auspices of the California Postsecondary Education Commission. The Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program provides federal funds from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 to universities that are leaders in teacher professional development.

Current Grants

A total of 22 individual grants and two master grants are in various stages in large and small school districts from San Diego to Eureka.

- Addressing the Achievement Gap in Elementary Schools (2008) — Six projects, commencing four years of professional development and evaluation research.
- K–2 Initiative (2007) — Nine projects providing teacher professional development, mostly in science and math, to teachers in early elementary grades. Completing the first year.
- Math and Science Teacher Retention Master Grants (2006) — Two projects that include nine science projects and 10 mathematics projects based at universities that are part of the California Math Project and the California Science Project. Entering the third year of four-year projects.
- Academic Literacy in Secondary Schools (2005) — Seven projects, entering the fourth and final year when evaluation research will be concluded.

Three projects funded in 2001 have concluded large-scale professional development but continue to build sustainable activities. These projects have been provided small amounts of additional funding beyond the fourth year and are working to identify how the projects will continue after funding ceases. This will be the last year the Commission's ITQ program provides funding to these projects.

- BAHIA, San Diego State University — Improving science knowledge for high school teachers through scientific exploration with field trips to nearby natural sites, and involving secondary students from underrepresented groups in training teachers.
- Teach to Advance Student Achievement in Mathematics and Science, City College of San Francisco — Community college students and pre-service teachers at San Francisco State University are paired with San Francisco Unified teachers to improve science and math content knowledge and teaching skills.
- SPREE, Science Projects Related to Equity in Education, CSU Sacramento — Providing science workshops and lesson study to Sacramento-area teachers in high-poverty K–12 schools and sponsoring a statewide Lesson Study Conference.

2008 Grants

The Commission provides news releases whenever it funds a new round of grants, and in recent years, has sent news releases for individual grants.

This is the first year that the Commission has made a major effort to garner more media attention than with news releases. Staff ordered a five-foot long vinyl check that can be personalized to each grant recipient. Check presentations at school district sites have resulted in radio, television, and newspaper coverage in San Francisco for a project at Franklin Elementary School in Oakland, and articles published in newspapers and news websites on the CSU Chico–Gridley Unified School District project (see attached). Legislative and congressional staff have attended the check presentation events. It is challenging to carry out this plan in a tough budget year, and presentations may not be scheduled for every project, due to the travel costs involved. But its initial success showed that it is an effort that should continue in future grant cycles to the extent that resources allow.

Upcoming Activities

Two RFPs are on the ITQ horizon. In the near term, staff are inviting four major university providers of professional development to submit proposals for demonstration grants for a project called Teacher-Based Reform (T-BAR). T-BAR is intended to allow teams of three to five teachers to compete for two-year, \$30,000-maximum grants to design and carry out their own projects. While they work in partnership with universities and their school district, teachers will be able to conduct projects that meet their needs in the classroom and that can be shared with and replicated by colleagues in their school and district.

In the latter years of the Eisenhower Program, the Commission sponsored the Teacher Academic Achievement Program, where teachers conducted a number of successful projects — many of which resulted in long-lasting improvement activities in their schools. The Commission is attempting to pilot this effort under ITQ with somewhat different rules. The Commission is committing about \$2 million to this three-year effort. Staff has divided the state into four regions with one grantee per region who must conduct a competition for teacher teams and support the selected teams throughout the terms of the grant.

Planning is also underway to determine the content and target focus of the 2009 RFP. The RFP will likely not be limited to elementary schools as the last two have been, but is expected to continue the Commission's effort to reduce the achievement gap. Staff expects to recruit a larger pool of proposers, to provide more effective guidance on developing proposals in order to make the process more competitive, and to fund more projects than in 2008.