



June 2007

# Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) Program – Current Projects and the New RFP

*This report discusses professional development projects that are currently funded by the Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) State Grants Program, including representative projects that will be presented to the Commission at the June meeting. In addition, the ITQ program has recently released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for grants that serve early elementary teachers in grades K-2, and a report on the progress of that competition is included. The report also briefly discusses the implications of the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 on program activity.*

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The Commission advises the Governor and the Legislature on higher education policy and fiscal issues. Its primary focus is to ensure that the State’s educational resources are used effectively to provide Californians with postsecondary education opportunities. More information about the Commission is available at [www.cpec.ca.gov](http://www.cpec.ca.gov).

The Commission’s Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) Program staff are currently in the middle of a funding competition that is the primary focus for activity this spring. In addition, staff for the program—funded under Title II-A of the No Child Left Behind Act—continue to administer a number of recently-awarded projects and to complete projects from prior funding cycles. In addition to outlining the status of program activity, this report highlights presentations at the Commission’s June 5-6, 2007, meeting by representatives of several ITQ projects.

## The 2007 Request for Proposals — Early Elementary Education Grades K-2

The 2007 Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) Program was released in late April, and institutions of higher education are currently preparing proposals for funding. Consistent with prior RFPs in recent years, this competition is targeted to particular educational priorities. It also has a requirement to include an evaluation research component that assesses whether the professional development is having an effect on student achievement. There were a number of factors that determined the 2007 focus, *Early Elementary Education Grades K-2*. They are:

- Release of draft *Preschool Foundations* in April 2007 by the California Department of Education. These are intended to provide guidance for pre-kindergarten educators to help enhance school readiness and give children entering kindergarten the best start. Their adoption later this year is a unique opportunity for K-2 teachers to think about how their work builds on the pre-school experience, and to articulate with both preschool and grade three and beyond.

- By addressing early education, program staff are seeking to have a direct impact on the achievement gap that is a priority for State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell. Giving children the best start is important to reducing that gap, and enhancing the effectiveness of K-2 teachers is clearly a valuable contribution to that goal.
- Elementary school teachers struggle to address academic subjects other than reading because the demands of testing and accountability put such a heavy focus on reading—the fundamental skill underpinning all learning. These projects aim to help multiple subject teachers better address math, science, social studies, arts and other subjects in classrooms in ways that also support students’ basic reading skills.
- ITQ projects for the past several years have targeted secondary schools, but there is a great need for professional development in elementary education.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) was posted April 23, 2007, on the California Postsecondary Education Commission’s website. The Commission’s Information Systems staff created a web portal that supports the RFP process. At the time the RFP was posted, ITQ staff also mailed postcards to every college and university and K-12 district in the State, and sent e-mails to those same agencies and other individuals and organizations. To help those who may wish to submit a proposal, meetings were held at three locations throughout California the week of May 7 to provide information and technical assistance.

The deadline for higher education institutions to send a Letter of Intent to Submit a Proposal is May 25. Staff will update the Commission regarding how many agencies qualified to submit a proposal. Only institutions that sent a notice will actually be allowed to submit a proposal. The deadline for submission of proposals is July 3. Copies will be sent to readers for review over the next several weeks, and reader panels will be convened in early- to mid-August to identify the top proposals for interviews. Interviews will be held in late August, with final decisions on which projects to fund targeted for late September. It is expected that awards will be announced and funding will begin by October 1, 2007.

## The 2006 Grants — Retention of Science and Mathematics Teachers

Local projects have now been selected as a result of the 2006 master grant awards targeting the retention of science and mathematics teachers. Two large master grants awarded in November provided competitions resulting in ten subgrants each in mathematics and science. All the sites are now gearing up for their first summer of professional development activities. The California Science Project and the California Mathematics Projects are funding the multi-year projects at the following sites:

SCIENCE PROJECTS	MATH PROJECTS
CSU Chico	CSU Chico
UCLA	UCLA
UC Irvine	UC Irvine
CSU Fresno	CSU Fresno
CSU San Diego-Imperial Valley Center	CSU San Diego-Imperial Valley Center
CSU Humboldt	UC Santa Barbara
CSU Northridge	CSU Dominguez Hills

SCIENCE PROJECTS (cont'd)	MATH PROJECTS (cont'd)
UC Riverside	CSU Sacramento
UC San Diego	CSU Bakersfield
Cal Poly SLO	CSU San Bernardino

By the end of 2007, in addition to the 20 subgrants listed above, approximately 20 projects will be operating under our 2005 and 2007 initiatives. Commission staff is also planning for the 2008 initiative. Its focus has yet to be determined, but the ITQ grant competitions will continue to require an evaluation research component and to target areas of identified need in California K-12 education.

### Project Presentations

At the June Commission meeting, staff will present a sample of the projects that have been or are being conducted with ITQ grants. Each project director will describe what they have accomplished with the funding they were awarded. The projects include:

**Teach to Achieve Student Achievement in Science and Mathematics (SAMS)**, an innovative partnership led by San Francisco City College in partnership with San Francisco State University and the San Francisco Unified School District to get more teachers in the pipeline, to better prepare them for challenging urban schools, and to deepen support for teachers already in the classroom. The project director is Kathleen White. This project began in January 2003 and concluded its last activities in October 2006.

**Sacramento Science Projects Related to Equity in Education (SPREE)**, based at California State University, Sacramento, in partnership with the Sacramento County Office of Education. It emphasizes educational equity in Professional Development Schools to increase teacher expertise and student learning in science. The project was one of the first ITQ projects to center on the model known as “lesson study” in which teachers jointly prepare a lesson, teach it, and then work with each other to improve it for the future. This project began in January 2003; it has been extended into the current year and will conclude at the end of June 2007.

**Access to the Core: Support for Secondary English Language Learners**, one of the Commission’s newer projects, funded in late 2005 and now in its second year. This was one of the eight projects funded under the initiative on Academic Literacy in Secondary Schools. It’s a unique partnership of the University of California San Diego and Local District 6 of the Los Angeles Unified School District. The project aims to meet the academic literacy needs of secondary English Language Learners through professional development for teachers in the core academic subjects of mathematics and English/Language Arts. It began in winter 2005; its professional development phase will continue through fall of 2008 and it will conclude the evaluation research on its outcomes by the fall of 2009.

### NCLB Reauthorization

Improving Teacher Quality staff are monitoring any potential changes to the program that could result from the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act. The law is up for renewal in Congress this year, and the reauthorization process is anticipated to be lengthy and potentially controversial. It is not anticipated that there will be major changes in the portions of the law focusing on professional development to improve teacher quality. However, the section of law providing funding for State Agencies for Higher Education (SAHEs) has been threatened with elimination in past reauthorizations. No such proposals have surfaced this year, and early indications are that the program will be continued and may even be improved by minor changes in the law. The timing for reauthorization is still indefinite; if it

does not move forward in this year's session, it is expected the current law will be continued through 2008. Executive Director Haberman has written a letter to our Congressional delegation to support continuation of the SAHE-based program; a copy is included. In addition, we will continue to work with the national organization of State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) to support the program and assure that any changes in it are beneficial.

The importance of this particular part of the No Child Left Behind Act is that it is one of the few sources of truly discretionary, cutting-edge professional development funding available to the State's higher education institutions and Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Funding from the program aims to support initiatives that can become models for utilization of other funding sources. Professional development funding in California is still insufficient to meet growing demands fueled by education reform and highly-qualified teacher requirements. The Commission's focus on high quality, standards-based professional development models is designed to make the most effective use of resources that exist. By disseminating evaluation research that demonstrates project success, the Commission can contribute to the replication of effective models that change classroom practice and support increased student achievement beyond the lives of the projects themselves. This program also engages the expertise of institutions of higher education, and is one of the few sources of funding that support the leadership of higher education in professional development partnerships. As staff focus more and more on reforms that our education systems urgently need, professional development plays a key role and the leadership of the Commission's Improving Teacher Quality Program is more important than ever.

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*This letter was sent to the California Congressional delegation and  
U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings*  
May 21, 2007

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

As you consider the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the California Postsecondary Education Commission expresses its strong support for an important program in that Act. The Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) State Grants Program—Title II, Part A, Subpart 3—has been invaluable in providing high quality professional development for many thousands of California teachers.

The ITQ program funds competitive grants to colleges and universities to develop and implement projects aimed at ensuring that every teacher is highly qualified. As the designated State Agency for Higher Education (SAHE), the Commission has administered this program for many years. It was first established in the 1980s and later became known as the Eisenhower Professional Development Program. We have funded more than 90 partnership projects serving tens of thousands of California teachers and planting the seeds for successful and sustainable professional development in hundreds of schools.

What makes this program so important is the partnership connection it fosters between higher education and K-12 schools. Federal law offers few such opportunities to mobilize the expert knowledge of postsecondary educators, including content specialists, to directly support K-12 teacher improvement. The projects that result lead the way in improving teacher practice and supporting increased student achievement. By its very nature, ITQ promotes research-based, content-focused, high quality, sustainable professional development that is vital to the NCLB's reform goals. That is why it is so important to maintain this program in the new federal law and to consider its expansion over time.

We understand that many issues will be considered in the reauthorization process. We hope, however, that you will be attentive to this small but critical part of the law, and we encourage you to strongly support its retention in the new law. If you have questions, please contact Karen Humphrey, Administrator, Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program, at 916-445-1504 or [khumphrey@cpec.ca.gov](mailto:khumphrey@cpec.ca.gov). Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Murray J. Haberman  
Executive Director

cc: Paul Lingenfelter, State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)  
Members, California Postsecondary Education Commission

