



# CPEC

## Update on the Improving Teacher Quality Program

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The Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) State Grants Program is currently operating professional development grants for California teachers at 40 sites statewide. This is as large a cadre of projects as the California Postsecondary Education Commission has operated since the ITQ Program began with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

The projects are:

- Academic Literacy in Secondary Education (seven projects)
- Science and Math Teacher Retention Master Grant Initiative (19 sites)
- K-2 Education (eight projects)
- Elementary Education (six projects)

The sites include universities and local education agencies from Humboldt County on the north coast to the Imperial Valley near the U.S.–Mexico border. Each project serves up to 300 teachers, and thousands of students in K-12 classes benefit from the professional development offered to their teachers.

It has been CPEC policy to award grants for three- to five-year periods, allowing time to carry out the professional development activities and to complete scientifically based research that identifies the effects on teacher practice and student achievement. The academic literacy projects are in their final year and are completing data collection and analysis. The findings will be reported at an ITQ-sponsored research conference at UC Irvine in September. Many projects, including some that are not yet finished, plan to present papers at the American Educational Research Association conference in San Diego in April. Other presentations and publications are planned throughout 2009.

The 2005 academic literacy projects are the first cohort to conduct this scientifically based research. There was a definite learning process in working with researchers, collecting data in schools and classrooms, and dealing with changes in the project implementation that also affected the research plan. There is great enthusiasm about this work among ITQ project directors and elsewhere in the California professional development community. It is likely that research results from future grants will increase and expand the possibilities for dissemination beyond the ITQ community.

A large number of project directors from higher education and K-12 partners attended the recent annual Project Directors' meeting in Los Angeles. The challenge of doing the evaluation research was described in a panel discussion that included research directors and a project director. The meeting included a presentation by Phil LaFontaine, Director of the Professional Development and Curriculum Support Division at the California Department of Education, who said that ITQ grants are particularly important because state-funded professional development programs will be severely cut back due to the state's budget crisis.

## 2009 Request for Proposals

The 2009 Request for Proposals (RFP) is targeted for release in mid-to-late March. The release will include two RFPs. One will be in the “standard” format — four-year stand-alone projects with a program of professional development activities and a research component. This will carry the achievement gap model, and will move the initiative to middle school teachers. While it may not be feasible to require proposals to serve whole schools, as the elementary education RFP did, they will be required to serve clusters of teachers in subjects within schools. Projects will also be expected to develop teacher leaders at the schools.

The second RFP, “Teacher-Based Reform,” T-BAR, will fund four master regional projects. Each master grant will be operated by a university-based partner that will solicit grant applications from K-12 teacher teams. These teams, made up of three to five teachers each, will design their own two-year projects, which must show sustained activities, site-based if possible. Each project has to be shared with other teachers in the school. This initiative is modeled after the Teacher Academic Achievement Project of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The final group of 12 teams conducted a wide variety of projects that teachers were able to model for their colleagues and use in their own classrooms. The level of enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers was high, and the projects were considered cost effective. T-BAR is expected to cost about \$30,000 per team. Each of the four regional grantees will fund and administer 12 teacher team grants, and also conduct scientifically based evaluation of the projects.

These RFPs will require proposals to be submitted by late spring. They will be reviewed over the summer, and grants will be awarded by October 1. CPEC expects to award \$8 million to \$10 million in grants in 2009.

## Website and Brochure Update

The ITQ program has long had its own website. Program staff, with the assistance of consultant Jason MacCannell, have redesigned the website to increase graphical content, make navigation easier, expand the information available, and include more information on each active grant. Dr. MacCannell and program staff are exploring the possibility of a message board so that project directors and other staff can share information and questions. Staff expect the website will be operational within the next few weeks.

ITQ staff have developed a new brochure with specifics on the grants issued since the No Child Left Behind Act went into effect. The brochure includes reports on each initiative, current data, and a map showing locations of grants awarded since the first ITQ grants in 2003.

## Program Transition

With the appointment of the program administrator to be Executive Director of the Commission, it will be necessary to consider options for managing the program. Administrative assistant Natalie Sidarous and student assistant Kaytie Speziale will manage the program, backed up by Commission senior staff and a contracted consultant. The RFP process and other administrative and program development activities will run smoothly while a transition plan is developed. The ITQ program will continue to be a valuable and successful part of the Commission’s work.