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California Postsecondary Education Commission

# The Commission's Improving Teacher Quality Program: 2008 Initiatives

ITEM 7  
DRAFT

A number of activities are progressing in the Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) program, the federally funded program that the Commission administers to provide professional development to California educators. This program is part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), and continues the work that began as the Eisenhower Teacher Professional Development Program more than two decades ago. In recent years, the program has evolved into an effort that focuses on major priorities in K–12 education, and seeks to evaluate whether the professional development being offered actually affects teacher practice and student achievement.

This report provides an update on current grants, project activities, a recent Project Directors meeting, publication of a research field guide to help with evaluation of the projects, and the 2008 Request for Proposals process.

The ITQ program is a significant benefit to California educators. Few professional development programs take advantage of a close partnership between colleges and universities and K–12 educators, in spite of the critical role of higher education in teacher preparation. The program also emphasizes the sustained, site-based, teacher-driven, collaborative professional development that has shown itself to be the most effective. The Commission will continue efforts to provide leadership that expands and strengthens quality professional development programs throughout California.

## Current Grants

Current projects consist of three groups that began with the 2005 funding cycle:

- The first group funds seven grants for professional development to strengthen academic literacy in secondary schools. These projects help teachers bring literacy skills — reading, writing, and speaking — into academic subjects, helping students improve their literacy and better master subject matter in their courses. These grants began in late 2005 and are in the third of three years in which they provide professional development. They will continue through most of 2009 to complete research on student outcomes of the grant activities. This group originally included eight projects, but one was discontinued after two years due to low enrollment and problems in program delivery.
- Two master grants were funded in 2006 and will continue through 2011. These focus on retention of science and mathematics teachers, complementing intensive state efforts to train more teachers in these critical subjects. The master grants are operated by the California Science Project and the California Mathematics Project. Each held a competition in early 2007 to fund ten local sites. Between 270 and 300 teachers are served by each of the master grants, and many others indirectly benefit from the activities on school sites. The projects are generally successful, but a few local sites are working to address issues such as teacher recruitment.
- In late 2007, the Commission funded nine grants serving K–2 teachers. These grants include a number of projects in science, math, and other subjects. Most of them focus on professional development models such as Professional Learning Communities and Lesson Study, and strategies such

as Cognitively Guided Instruction — models that research shows to be effective in changing teacher practice and increasing student achievement. Some grants link with preschool programs to coordinate efforts with the implementation of a new set of Preschool Learning Foundations recently released by the California Department of Education. Although it is early in the first year of implementation, these grants appear to be off to a good start.

The current grants serve school districts from the far northern coast to the southern border in Imperial County. A list of the projects is included on Page 5. Many grants serve urban school districts, particularly in southern California, but at least four serve rural areas in the Central Valley where poverty, English language issues, and isolation create severe challenges for teachers and students. In all cases, the projects are expected not just to deliver high-quality professional development, but to conduct in-depth evaluation seeking evidence of the impact on teacher practice and student achievement.

### **Project and Program Activities**

In February, ITQ staff convened its annual project directors meeting in Los Angeles. The meeting brought together directors from the participating universities and school districts, research directors for the new group of projects, and directors of the subgrant projects in the Math and Science Teacher Retention master grants. This was the largest meeting of ITQ constituents in recent years, with about 90 attendees. Executive Director Murray Haberman addressed the group to express his and the Commission's support for the program.

In addition to informational sessions on program procedures and resources, the meeting included a “world café” form of facilitated group discussion — renamed the “ITQ Café” — where project directors rotated among tables for small-group discussions on issues such as the challenges and opportunities for professional developers and how communication can be improved among project partnerships and with outside stakeholders. There was strong engagement in these discussions, resulting in many recommendations that will be considered by both program administration and project staff. High on the list was better use of technology to provide opportunities for interactive communication among project directors so they can share lessons learned and provide materials that have worked for them. Program staff agreed to expand and refine the ITQ page on the Commission's website to implement some of the recommendations.

In March, Program Administrator Karen Humphrey traveled to Washington, D.C. for the annual meeting of Title II-A program staff from state K-12 education agencies and state higher education agencies. The agenda included discussions of reauthorization of NCLB, including the shift from a focus on “highly qualified teachers” to one that emphasizes “highly effective teachers.” California Title II-A administrators were also briefed about monitoring visits scheduled for mid-April. U.S. Department of Education monitors will meet with Commission ITQ staff, and may also visit one of the current projects. During the Washington visit, Ms. Humphrey met with California congressional members and their staffs to discuss the value and impact of the ITQ program.

### **Research Field Guide**

The addition of a research component to the ITQ projects since 2005 has been a real learning process, both for project directors and program administrative staff. As the grants have been implemented, it has become apparent that carrying out a sound research plan in the real world, especially in an era of heightened accountability and constantly-changing school reform initiatives, poses significant challenges. Real-world issues, such as less-than-expected teacher participation in professional development, can affect the research plan. In that case, it becomes difficult to assure that sufficient numbers are available

for conclusive research findings. Some projects have also had to adjust to other changes that affect their original research plans.

Commission staff and members of its Assessment and Dissemination (A&D) Team who provide the evaluation of programs concluded that we must provide more guidance for projects grappling with research requirements and realities. For that reason, A&D Team Director Howard Levine wrote *Examining Educational Experiments: A Field Guide for Conducting Scientifically Based Research*, published as a Commission report. This guide is an overview that helps projects understand what is meant by “scientifically based research,” especially as it is defined by the U.S. Department of Education in NCLB.

The purpose of the guide is not to teach project directors how to *be* researchers, but to help them *work with* researchers to know what is needed from the beginning of a project to assure meaningful findings at its conclusion. The guide is meant for a wider group of stakeholders than just those directly responsible for the data collection and analysis. It provides useful information to project staff at the university and school district who are critical to the success of the research being done as a project progresses. The first edition was presented to current project and research directors at their February meeting and was well received. The guide is being distributed in print and online. Input is requested to improve future editions. Commission staff considers the field guide to be a unique resource that will be helpful to educators outside the program, as well as to project staff.

## **The 2008 Request for Proposals**

In each of the past several years, the Commission has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for new ITQ projects. This year, we released the RFP in early March. A copy is included in the agenda packet and is available on the Commission’s website.

Each year, we have targeted a particular educational need which was established through discussions with the California Department of Education, other state agencies, the A&D Team, and the Advisory Committee. This year’s RFP seeks to support the initiative launched by state Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell to address the achievement gap. The achievement gap has been visible for many years and poses a strong threat to educational equity, access, and support for historically disadvantaged subgroups, especially racial and ethnic groups. The Superintendent held a conference last fall looking at strategies and programs that have been shown to help reduce the achievement gap. Many presenters emphasized the importance of teacher professional development in helping Black and Latino students do better in student achievement tests. It was also clear that addressing the issue teacher-by-teacher will not produce change on the scale needed. Reform must be made at the whole-school level — involving all teachers and the principal at a minimum. The role of teacher leaders in promoting fundamental change in the school was also a theme in many presentations.

For those reasons, the RFP focuses on whole-school reform in elementary schools (K–6 or, in some cases, K–8). Projects should provide service over the life of the grant to all teachers and the principal in selected schools. The development of teacher leaders who can help sustain improvements after the grant is over is completed a key requirement. The RFP does not specify the strategies that projects should use, but requires that whatever is selected be based on scientifically based research that shows it to be effective. Proposers are encouraged to look at high-poverty, high-performing schools that, in the words of one report, are “beating the odds” and to build their intervention around strategies that have helped those schools succeed with all of their students. The research that will be conducted as part of these projects must also seek to measure if the project narrows the achievement gap in the school, not just whether it changes teacher practice and raises the achievement of students as a whole.

The RFP was issued in early March and posted on the Commission website. Postcards announcing availability were mailed to all postsecondary institutions, especially Schools of Education and Arts and

Sciences, and to school districts with elementary schools. In addition, an e-mail notice was distributed announcing that the RFP had been posted. Applicants must notify the Commission of their intent to submit a proposal shortly after informational meetings are held in southern California and Sacramento in early April. Readers are also being recruited to provide peer review of the proposals after they are submitted in late May. Finalists will be interviewed before selections are made. It is expected this next group of proposals will begin their work in the fall 2008.

**ITQ Projects Operating in 2008**

Project	Project partners	Grades and subjects	Amount	Contact
<b>2005 RFP. Adolescent Literacy in Secondary Schools. November 2005–September 2009</b>				
Content Academic Language Literacy Institute (CALLI) ITQ-02-301	CSU Bakersfield Delano Joint Union HSD	9–12 Science, Math	\$986,078	Debra Cook-Hirai (661) 654-3129 dhirai@csub.edu
Developing Rigorous Education in the Arts to Motivate Students (DREAMS) ITQ-02-316	CSU San Bernardino San Bernardino City USD	9–12 Visual and Performing Arts	\$991,328	Armalyne De La O (909) 537-5938 adelao@csusb.edu
Redwood Area Academic Literacy Initiative (RAALI) ITQ-02-319	Humboldt State University Konocti USD	9–12 Science, Math, History	\$994,032	Jeffrey White (707) 826-5551 jww12@humboldt.edu
Reading, Thinking and Writing in History and Science ITQ-02-335	UC Davis Grant Joint Union HSD	9–12 Science, History	\$1,000,000	Arthur Beauchamp (530) 752-5876 acbeauchamp@ucdavis.edu
Accelerating Academic Literacy: A Cognitive Strategies Approach to Reading and Writing Instruction ITQ-02-337	UC Irvine Lynwood USD	7–12 English/Language Arts	\$875,020	Carol Booth Olson (949) 824-7842 cbolson@uci.edu
Literacy in the History Classroom ITQ-02-339	UC Irvine Santa Ana USD	9–12 History	\$935,948	Nicole Gilbertson (949) 824-2057 gilbertn@uci.edu
Access to the Core: Support for Secondary English Language Learners ITQ-02-342	UC San Diego Los Angeles USD, District 6	7–12 English/Language Arts, Math	\$1,000,000	Gretchen Laue (858) 822-0148 glaue@ucsd.edu
<b>2006 RFP. Science and Mathematics Teacher Retention. November 2006–September 2011</b>				
California Science Project Teacher Retention Initiative (CSP-TRI) ITQ-03-350	UCLA, 10 subgrantees 10 subgrantee districts	Science	\$5,243,182	Maria Lopez-Freeman (310) 794-4861 mafreema@ucla.edu
California Math Project Supporting Teachers to Retention (CMP-STIR) ITQ-03-360	UCLA, 10 subgrantees 10 subgrantee districts	Math	\$5,250,000	Susie Hakansson (310) 794-9885 shakans@ucla.edu

Project	Project partners	Grades and subjects	Amount	Contact
<b>Early Elementary Education, Grades K–2. November 2007–September 2011</b>				
ArtsCore K-2: Teachers as Artists ITQ-07-400	UC Irvine San Diego USD	K–2 History/Social Science, English, Arts	\$828,219	Liane Brouillette (949) 824-4317 lbrouill@uci.edu
K-2 STARTS: Science & Technology Assistance for Rural Teachers & Small Districts ITQ-07-401	University of the Pacific Multiple in San Joaquin & other counties	K–2 Science	\$991,948	Lynn Beck (209) 946-2680 lbeck@pacific.edu
Mathematics in the Early Grades (MEG) ITQ-07-404	CSU Chico Red Bluff USD	K–2 Math	\$944,415	Jorgen Berglund (530) 898-5350 jjberglund@csuchico.edu
Science-Centered Literacy for K-2 Students: Project SMART ITQ-07-412	Chapman University Anaheim City School District	K–2 Math, Science, English	\$901,404	Roxanne Greitz Miller (714) 628-2628 rgmiller@chapman.edu
Strategic Alliance of Robla/ UC Davis/Sacramento COE ITQ-07-413	UC Davis Robla School District	K–2 Math	\$273,127	Rebecca Ambrose (530) 754-4831 rcambrose@ucdavis.edu
Mathematics and English Language Development (MELD) ITQ-07-415	San Diego State University (Imperial Valley) Calexico USD	K–2 Math	\$971,371	Leslie Garrison (760) 768-5656 lgarriso@mail.sdsu.edu
Science & Math Impacting Learners of English (SMILE) ITQ-07-418	UC Irvine Compton USD	K–2 Math, Science	\$999,666	George Miller (949) 824-6649 gemiller@uci.edu
K-2 Teaching Learning Collaborative ITQ-07-420	CSU Long Beach Montebello & Garvey USDs	K–2 Science	\$950,694	Susan Gomez-Zweip (562) 985-5574 sgomezwp@csulb.edu
Mathematics Understanding, Learning and Teaching (MULT) ITQ-07-424	CSU Fresno Riverdale USD	K–2 Math	\$968,370	Melanie Wenrick (559) 278-0238 mwenrick@csufresno.edu