

May 2007

Title II, Part A – Improving Teacher Quality Program Update

Information Item

This is an informational report to the members of the Higher Education Coordinating Board at its May 24, 2007 meeting. No board action is necessary at this time.

Introduction

Since July 2002, the U.S. Department of Education has awarded the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) about \$1.2 million per year for the No Child Left Behind Washington State Higher Education Improving Teacher Quality Program. The money is used to fund and administer competitive partnership grants for projects that provide professional development for K-12 teachers, principals, and highly qualified paraprofessionals. HECB expects to receive an additional \$1.2 million for the program on July 1, 2007.

The program's purpose is to increase student achievement in core academic subjects by improving educator quality through professional development. Thus, the program helps students succeed by helping educators educate.

Background

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), signed into law by President Bush on January 8, 2002, reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA).

Title II, Part A of NCLB established the Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund in order to increase student academic achievement using various strategies -- including improving teacher and principal quality through professional development. Title II, Part A, revised and replaced the Eisenhower Professional Development Program, which focused on math and science.

Title II, Part A has three subparts. In Washington state, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) administers subpart 1 and subpart 2 programs, which provide resources directly to school districts.

HECB administers the subpart 3 competitive partnership grant program, known as the No Child Left Behind Washington State Higher Education Improving Teacher Quality Program. HECB works with OSPI to determine program goals and other aspects of the program.

Program Partners

Eligible partnerships consist of three required partners and any number of optional partners.

Required partners:

- A public or private institution of higher education and the division of the institution that prepares teachers and/or principals
- A school of arts and sciences
- A high-need school district

Optional partners include (for a complete list, see NCLB §2131(1)(B) in Appendix A):

- Additional school districts
- Educational service agencies
- Nonprofit educational organizations
- Additional colleges or universities
- Nonprofit cultural organizations
- Teacher organizations
- Principal organizations
- Businesses

Program Goals

Improving Teacher Quality projects must be designed to achieve one or more of the following program goals:

1. Increase participants' subject-matter knowledge (including the use of computer-related technology to enhance student learning) of mathematics and/or content-area reading (reading within subject areas – such as science).
2. Increase participants' ability to use challenging Washington state academic content and student achievement standards and Washington state assessments to improve instructional practices and improve student academic achievement in mathematics and/or content-area reading.
3. Increase principals' instructional leadership skills that will help them work most effectively with teachers to help students master mathematics and/or content-area reading.

HECB and OSPI cooperatively determine these goals each year. The goals are derived from the federally allowable uses for the money, which are spelled out in NCLB §2134 (See Appendix A). HECB and OSPI also cooperatively determine how to target the partnership grants. This year, the focus is on middle school and senior high school educators.

Program Operation

HECB awards grants through a competitive process: issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP), establishing a review panel to evaluate the proposals, and selecting semi-finalists based on reviewer scores and the geographical location of the school districts served. HECB awards funds to semi-finalist projects that successfully complete contract negotiations with the agency.

Each partnership awarded funds must enter into a contract with HECB. The contract binds the project's partners to follow all applicable rules and regulations. During the term of the contract, the partnership conducts professional development activities and submits invoices for those activities. The partnership must also submit midterm and final reports.

HECB monitors the project in various ways including, but not limited to, midterm and final reports, examination of invoices together with their supporting transaction details, and site visits.

Program Legal Requirements

The Improving Teacher Quality program is subject to various legal requirements, both general and program specific. The general legal requirements apply broadly to many U.S. Department of Education grants. For example, projects can only charge a grant for reasonable and necessary items.

The program-specific requirements apply to the Improving Teacher Quality program in particular. They are of interest here because they constrain HECB's ability to freely use the grant money in support of HECB initiatives. In addition to (§2134) requirements governing what types of professional development activities the money can be used for, program-specific legal requirements include:

- A partnership must include all of the required partners;
- No single partner may use more than 50 percent of the partnership's funds; and
- The grants must be equitably distributed geographically.

Program Professional Development Activities

As long as partnerships follow the legal requirements, they may design their projects using a variety of professional development models, which could include a mix of the following:

- College courses;
- Intensive institutes offered in the summer;
- Shorter workshops offered over time during the school year (e.g., 1-2 days per month over a period of months);
- Telecommunicated opportunities offered during the summer and/or school year;
- Training opportunities (including coaching and teacher mentoring) delivered onsite at schools, educational service districts, or other nearby sites; or
- One-to-one technical assistance.

Whatever models or approaches they employ, projects should provide sustained, high quality professional development activities. Each project should serve a minimum of 20 participants and provide a minimum of 80 hours of professional development activities for the primary group of participants (i.e. the K-12 educators targeted by the proposal) during the project period. Projects should avoid “one-shot” training approaches and should instead provide intensive training programs with appropriate follow-up components.

Projects should include follow-up components to encourage teachers (and principals and highly qualified paraprofessionals, as appropriate) to continually apply new knowledge and skills in the classroom. Examples of follow-up components include: teacher assignments conducted during the school year, teachers visiting other teachers’ classrooms, teachers working with building-level educator teams, and learning communities, and follow-up coaching.

Program Results So Far

Since 2003, the program has provided over \$4.5 million to 25 projects across the state, seven of which are still active. The table below summarizes the projects, which have ranged in duration from 10 to 38 months, with an average of 21 months:

| Primary Institution of Higher Education | Reading Projects | Math Projects | Joint Math/Reading Projects | Joint Math/Science Projects |
|---|------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Central Washington University | | | | 1 |
| Heritage University | 2 | | 1 | |
| Eastern Washington University | | 1 | 2 | |
| Saint Martin’s University | 2 | 1 | | |
| University of Washington | 4 | 3 | | |
| Washington State University | 3 | 1 | 1 | |
| Western Washington University | | 1 | | |
| Yakima Valley Community College | | | 2 | |

These projects have provided professional development to over 1,500 educators, serving tens of thousands of students per year. Projects have included a variety of professional development approaches, with the most popular model being a summer institute followed up with various activities during the academic year. Although that approach is the most popular, the jury is still out on which approach is most effective.

To determine project effectiveness, HECB initially hired an external evaluator, who reviewed the first eight projects via pre- and post-training participant surveys, classroom observations, focus groups, and student test scores. The evaluator found:

- The projects' professional development activities improved the quality of K-12 teachers and paraprofessionals, increasing both their academic content knowledge and their instructional skills.
- Participant learning was enhanced by follow-up meetings after summer institutes ended.
- Overall, math and reading scores of participants' students increased on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS); however, increases may have had more to do with wholesale changes within each school's curriculum and instructional practices, rather than professional development training.
- Math projects that included both subject matter content and instructional strategies resulted in deliberate and purposeful changes in teachers' and paraprofessionals' classroom practices.
- Having several educators from the same school participate together was very effective.
- When administrators also attended the training, new practices were more likely to be tried.

Subsequently, HECB has relied on self-reporting by projects. Each project has been free to choose its own evaluation methods. Consequently, HECB has not had a uniform basis on which to compare projects in terms of their effectiveness. A couple of projects hired their own independent evaluators, but most projects did not. Several projects administered pre- and post-project surveys to participants. Some also recorded observations of participant teacher classroom practices. A couple attempted to measure their impact on the students of the participants either with an academic assessment or with student surveys.

Despite the lack of uniformity in project reports, some common themes have emerged:

- Participant surveys indicated that participants felt the professional development helped them. Anecdotal comments from participants have supported this notion.
- Classroom observations (when reported) indicated that participants' teaching practices changed, as a result of the professional development they received.
- Participant responses to learning communities and other forms of group work has been very positive.
- Participants worried they would not have time to implement changes when they got back to their classrooms. They felt overwhelmed just doing their jobs.
- Project leaders worried that improvements in student performance were not observable within a short project timeframe.

Program Plans for the Future

At the national level, the ESEA is up for reauthorization. The Improving Teacher Quality program is unlikely to go away, but allowable activities may change, and there will not be any grandfather provisions for projects that are active when the new law takes effect. Consequently, the HECB has limited the project term for the next round of projects to 15 months, beginning in July 2007, to reduce the risk that the new law will shut down an expensive, multi-year project.

At the state level, staff will continue collaborative efforts with OSPI. In addition to jointly determining program goals, OSPI staff will help HECB staff review new proposals this year. In return, HECB staff have helped OSPI review proposals for OSPI's Math Science Partnership program, and have volunteered to help review proposals OSPI receives for other programs. Also, OSPI published HECB RFP announcement in one of its newsletters, and HECB has offered the same consideration in future agency newsletters.

At the agency level, HECB staff will look for opportunities to coordinate the Improving Teacher Quality program with other HECB activities and policies. For example, 2004 Strategic Master Plan policy proposal number 8, "Helping Students Make the Transition to College," involves collaboration between the K-12 and higher education systems to develop a comprehensive definition of college readiness. The Improving Teacher Quality program can be a useful tool in implementing such initiatives. HECB has taken a first step in that direction this year by incorporating college readiness into one of the criteria that proposal reviewers will use to score proposals. Similar coordination may be possible with regard to other HECB initiatives.

In addition, the Improving Teacher Quality program Request for Proposals (RFP) can serve as a public information tool for HECB initiatives. For example, this year's RFP listed links to three different college readiness-related Web sites. The current RFP may have been the first exposure to college readiness definitions for many prospective applicants. The RFP is widely circulated among both public and private institutions.

Finally, plans are underway to strengthen the evaluation process by:

- Requiring projects to include rigorous evaluation components in their work plan; for example, participants may be required to take pre- and post-treatment subject matter tests;
- Strengthening reporting requirements; and
- Moving to longer term projects, once the ESEA is reauthorized. This should make it easier for projects to document changes in student achievement.

Strengthening the evaluation process is consistent with HECB initiatives for greater accountability and should help determine which approaches to professional development are most effective. Institutions of higher education can benefit from effective approaches by incorporating them in their teacher preparation programs.

Appendix A

Title II, Part A, Subpart 3 of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

SEC. 2131. DEFINITIONS.

In this subpart:

(1) **ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIP**- The term eligible partnership' means an entity that -

(A) shall include -

- (i) a private or State institution of higher education and the division of the institution that prepares teachers and principals;
- (ii) a school of arts and sciences; and
- (iii) a high-need local educational agency; and

(B) may include another local educational agency, a public charter school, an elementary school or secondary school, an educational service agency, a nonprofit educational organization, another institution of higher education, a school of arts and sciences within such an institution, the division of such an institution that prepares teachers and principals, a nonprofit cultural organization, an entity carrying out a prekindergarten program, a teacher organization, a principal organization, or a business.

(2) **LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOL**- The term low-performing school' means an elementary school or secondary school that is identified under section 1116.

SEC. 2132. SUBGRANTS.

(a) **IN GENERAL**- The State agency for higher education for a State that receives a grant under section 2111, working in conjunction with the State educational agency (if such agencies are separate), shall use the funds reserved under section 2113(a)(2) to make subgrants, on a competitive basis, to eligible partnerships to enable such partnerships to carry out the activities described in section 2134.

(b) **DISTRIBUTION**- The State agency for higher education shall ensure that -

- (1) such subgrants are equitably distributed by geographic area within a State; or
- (2) eligible partnerships in all geographic areas within the State are served through the subgrants.

(c) **SPECIAL RULE**- No single participant in an eligible partnership may use more than 50 percent of the funds made available to the partnership under this section.

SEC. 2133. APPLICATIONS.

To be eligible to receive a subgrant under this subpart, an eligible partnership shall submit an application to the State agency for higher education at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the agency may require.

SEC. 2134. USE OF FUNDS.

(a) IN GENERAL- An eligible partnership that receives a subgrant under section 2132 shall use the subgrant funds for -

(1) professional development activities in core academic subjects to ensure that -

(A) teachers and highly qualified paraprofessionals, and, if appropriate, principals have subject-matter knowledge in the academic subjects that the teachers teach, including the use of computer related technology to enhance student learning; and

(B) principals have the instructional leadership skills that will help such principals work most effectively with teachers to help students master core academic subjects; and

(2) developing and providing assistance to local educational agencies and individuals who are teachers, highly qualified paraprofessionals, or principals of schools served by such agencies, for sustained, high-quality professional development activities that -

(A) ensure that the individuals are able to use challenging State academic content standards and student academic achievement standards, and State assessments, to improve instructional practices and improve student academic achievement;

(B) may include intensive programs designed to prepare such individuals who will return to a school to provide instruction related to the professional development described in subparagraph (A) to other such individuals within such school; and

(C) may include activities of partnerships between one or more local educational agencies, one or more schools served by such local educational agencies, and one or more institutions of higher education for the purpose of improving teaching and learning at low-performing schools.

(b) COORDINATION- An eligible partnership that receives a subgrant to carry out this subpart and a grant under section 203 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 shall coordinate the activities carried out under this subpart and the activities carried out under that section 203.