

**Improving Teacher Quality  
State Grant Program**

**2011 - 2012 Allocation  
to the State Agency for Higher Education**

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**Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education**

## IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY STATE GRANTS: SUMMARY SHEET – 2011-2012

Projects in bold are recommended for funding by the Independent Review Panel

PROJECT TITLE	INSTITUTION/DIRECTOR	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
<b>1. Geography Education Professional Development Workshops</b>	WSC / Bertolas	Provide geography content in one-week workshops; one workshop on geography of the frontier and one on historical geography of the city; four workshops over two summers with 80 total participants	\$67,400.00
2. Going the Distance: An Interactive Online Teacher Development Project for Teachers of World Languages	UNL / Moeller	Continuation (year 3) of pilot project to design online graduate course to help teachers develop technology skills while improving their target language skills and cultural knowledge; focus on French	\$79,554.00
3. Connecting for Change: Multiple Literacies for Multiple Teachers	UNO / Edwards	Continue to develop and support a network of teacher leaders devoted to literacy teaching and learning in the Omaha area, especially in middle and high schools; focus on multiple literacies using iPads	\$154,491.00
<b>4. Nebraska Blast! Improving Teacher Quality through STEM workshops</b>	UNO / Barker	Four different workshops across the state: earth and space science, robotics engineering, aeronautics and aviation, and high-altitude ballooning. Approximately 60 teachers	\$99,882.00
<b>5. Mathemantics: Learning the Power of Mathematical Communication</b>	UNO / Hodge	Omaha area teachers of grades 6 – 12 will learn how to express mathematics symbols and processes in words so that they can help students better understand the concepts behind mathematical computations	\$79,846.00
<b>6. New Literacies in Elementary Classrooms Today</b>	UNL / Trainin	Workshops for teachers to learn the content of the new literacies and ways to integrate the content and technology effectively in their classrooms; 85 teachers teamed with 100 preservice teachers, and 25 teacher educators	\$66,045.00
<b>7. Engaging Learners Across Nebraska</b>	NETA / Blankenship	Increase reading content knowledge and strategies for incorporating reading into other curricular areas; 15 teams state-wide with 5 teachers each	\$62,872.00
<b>TOTAL REQUESTED</b>			<b>\$610,090.00</b>

# **IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY STATE GRANT PROGRAM**

The purpose of the Improving Teacher Quality State Grant Program is to increase student academic achievement by helping to ensure that highly qualified teachers, paraprofessionals, and principals have access to sustained and intensive high quality professional development in core academic subjects. The program provides grants to partnerships comprised of Nebraska institutions of higher education and high-need local educational agencies (LEAs) for projects to improve the skills of teachers, paraprofessionals, and principals.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION PANEL December 12, 2011**

The evaluation panel met on December 12, 2011 at the Coordinating Commission office in Lincoln. Seven proposals were submitted by partnerships that involved four different institutions (UNL, UNO, Wayne State College, and Doane College), Nebraska Educational Technology Association, Nebraska Department of Education, NASA Nebraska Space Grant Consortium, and a variety of school districts and educational service units (ESUs).

At this time, the total amount of funds available for awards in 2011-2012 is \$346,194. The total amount recommended for the following five projects is \$351,567. While this exceeds the current amount available, every year previously funded projects come in under budget, returning funds to the Commission at the end of the grant. Such funds can be applied to the next year's grants and would cover the small difference between 2011-2012 funds available and the recommended funding. If there should then be remaining funds, those will be available for projects that may have more participant applications than slots funded or other unexpected costs or will be carried forward for use in the 2012-2013 competition.

Below are synopses of the five proposals the panel has recommended for funding. The title of the project is listed, followed by the project director, the required federal partners, and any other partners. Projects that are open state-wide may not have all additional partners identified until after their recruitment phase.

**Committee Recommendation: Committee concurs with the panel's recommendations.**

## **Engaging Learners Across Nebraska**

**Project Director: Sandy Blankenship**

- **Higher education partner (teachers college): Doane College**
- **Higher education partner (arts and sciences): Doane College**
- **High-need LEAs: Walthill Public School, Santee Community Schools, Niobrara Public Schools, Rock County Public Schools, Paxton Consolidated Schools, Chambers Public Schools, Southern Valley Schools, Wheeler Central Public Schools, Keya Paha Public Schools,**
- **Other identified partners: Aurora Public Schools, Schuyler Public Schools, St. Edward Public Schools, Columbus Public Schools, Mead Public Schools, Palmyra Bennet Schools, ESU #1, ESU #2, ESU #4, ESU #6, ESU #7, ESU #8, ESU #9, ESU #10, ESU #11, ESU #16, ESU #17, and Nebraska Educational Technology Association (NETA)**

This project has been funded several times, each time focusing on a different subject area. This year the project directors will focus on improving the reading skills of Nebraska students. To accomplish this, teachers from 15 teams across the state will learn how to apply new technologies and instructional strategies to their reading curriculum as well as applying reading skills to other content areas. Regional summer institutes will be held in three locations and ESU personnel will provide onsite support to teachers throughout the year. In addition to the high-need LEAs, five of the schools listed are also low-performing. And the average reading test scores for every participating school are well below the state average.

Amount Requested: \$62,872

Amount Recommended: \$62,872

## **Geography Education Professional Development Workshops**

**Project Director: Dr. Randy Bertolas**

- **Higher education partner (teachers college): Wayne State College, School of Education and Counseling**
- **Higher education partner (arts and sciences): Wayne State College, School of Natural and Social Sciences**
- **High-need LEA: Crawford Public Schools, Omaha Public Schools**
- **Other identified partners: Geographic Educators of Nebraska; workshops will be open to teachers statewide**

This project was first funded in 2010 with workshops held in Scottsbluff and Lincoln in 2010 and 2011. The current proposal would hold new workshops in Chadron and Omaha with priority given to teachers who have not participated in previous activities. Geography teachers and those interested in integrating geography into their curriculum will be eligible

to apply for the one-week workshops held in the summer of 2012 and repeated in 2013. One workshop will be “Geography of the Frontier – Northwest Nebraska,” focusing on Sandhills and Black Hills settlement, the fur trade, and geography within the literature of Mari Sandoz. The second workshop will be “Historical Geography of the City – Omaha,” focusing on historic growth and change, ethnic neighborhoods, heritage landmarks, and urban planning. Each workshop is planned for 20 teachers, with the four workshops reaching at least 80 teachers over two years.

Amount Requested: \$67,400  
Amount Recommended: \$67,400

## **New Literacies in Elementary Classrooms Today**

**Project Director: Dr. Guy Trainin**

- **Higher education partner (teachers college): UNL, College of Education and Human Sciences**
- **Higher education partner (arts and sciences): UNL, College of Arts and Sciences**
- **High-need LEA: Banner County Public Schools**
- **Other identified partners: Concordia University, Lincoln Public Schools, Seward Elementary School, Concordia Academy, Trinity Lutheran School, St. John Lutheran School**

New literacies are the skills, strategies, and thought processes necessary to use and adapt to the changing information and communication technologies and contexts rapidly emerging in today’s world. Nebraska education standards include several that focus on “technology and new literacies”. This project will offer four professional development conferences in which 85 teachers teamed with 100 preservice teachers, and 25 teacher educators, will learn the content of the new literacies and ways to integrate the content effectively in their classrooms.

Amount Requested: \$66,045  
Amount Recommended: \$66,045

## **Nebraska Blast! Improving Teacher Quality through STEM workshops**

**Project Director: Dr. Bradley Barker**

- **Higher education partner (teachers college): UNO, College of Education**
- **Higher education partner (arts and sciences): UNL, Institute of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources**
- **High-need LEA: Santee Community Schools**
- **Other identified partners: Nebraska Department of Education, NASA Nebraska Space Grant Consortium**

Leveraging existing resources within the Nebraska Department of Education (21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers) and the University of Nebraska at Omaha (NASA Nebraska Space Grant Consortium), this project will offer four different workshops, one at each of four locations across the state. If future funding is secured, the same workshops would be offered in subsequent summers, rotating to different locations. The topics will be earth and space science, robotics engineering, aeronautics and aviation, and high-altitude ballooning. The ballooning workshop will last five days, with the others lasting three days; all will include supplemental online activities. Approximately 60 teachers will receive instruction in implementing hands-on STEM curriculum with on-going support after the workshops.

Amount Requested: \$99,882\*  
Amount Recommended: \$85,448  
Reason for Reduction: Lowered instructional costs, consultant fees, travel expenses, and indirect costs.

## **Mathemantics: Learning the Power of Mathematical Communication**

**Project Director: Dr. Angela Hodge**

- **Higher education partner (teachers college): UNO, College of Education**
- **Higher education partner (arts and sciences): UNO, College of Arts and Sciences**
- **High-need LEA: Omaha Public Schools**
- **Other identified partners: some activities will be open to other area schools**

Mathematics teachers in grades 6 through 12 will be participants in this professional development activity. It will introduce a new concept called *Mathemantics*, loosely defined as the art and science of translating between English and mathematics. Teachers will learn how to express mathematics symbols and processes in words so that they can help their students better understand the concepts behind mathematical computations. Twenty teachers will participate in a summer workshop, followed by monthly meetings during the school year.

Amount Requested: \$79,846\*  
Amount Recommended: \$69,802  
Reason for Reduction: Lowered consultant and guest lecturer fees, travel costs, and supplies

\*The review panel requested these project directors to reduce their budgets without eliminating participants. The recommended amounts were calculated by the project directors to meet the panel's request.

# Panel for Evaluating Improving Teacher Quality Proposals

December 12, 2011

## Voting Members

Jim McGahan  
Grand Island Northwest High School  
Chemistry and Physics (Retired)  
Grand Island

Pat Madsen  
Teacher Education Program Specialist  
Nebraska Department of Education  
Lincoln/Stuart

Mike Musil  
9-12 Language Arts  
Lincoln North Star High School  
Lincoln

Mattie Olsen  
Instructional Technologist/Social Science  
Creighton Preparatory School  
Omaha

## Staff

Kathleen Fimple  
Academic Programs Officer

Miste Adamson-DaMoude  
Administrative Assistant

Kadi Lukesh  
Office Manager