



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI 2009-54

Thursday, June 4, 2009

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Wisconsin wins \$2.2 million Transition-to-Teaching grant

Five-year federal grant to train 100 teachers for high-need areas

MADISON—The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction received a \$2.2 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education to train 100 mathematics, science, and special education teachers through alternative certification programs.

The Support for Mid-Career Advancement and Retention through Transition-to-Teaching (SMARTT) Project targets mid-career professionals, paraprofessionals, college graduates without an education degree, and honorably discharged military personnel from diverse backgrounds to become licensed to teach mathematics, science, or special education through state-approved alternative certification programs. Over the last two years, Wisconsin has experienced more than 1,000 vacancies for mathematics, science, and special education teachers. The number of emergency licenses and permits requested by school districts for educators to teach in these critical areas also has increased.

“The quality of the teacher in the classroom is an important factor for improving student achievement,” said State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster. “Wisconsin, like most other states, has a clear need for highly qualified educators to teach mathematics, science, and students with special educational needs. This grant targets both critical-need subjects and high-need school districts to put highly qualified teachers where they are needed most.”

The project will work with 20 teachers each year. Participating districts will nominate educators who work in their schools and teach with an emergency license or permit. Through the SMARTT project, these educators will receive training in one or more critical-need subject area as well as the teaching methods required to earn certification. Districts also may sponsor individuals who would like to

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become mathematics, science, or special education teachers. They will complete teacher certification requirements and any other academic training through the SMARTT project. Most participants should be able to complete alternative certification requirements in about one year. Participants in the SMARTT Project will be expected to work for a minimum of three years in high-need schools located in the 15 participating school districts.

Criteria for district participation included poverty and teacher quality data that demonstrates high need. The districts will serve as training and mentoring sites for teachers who are employed and teach with an emergency permit or license. The districts also will be training and mentoring sites for recruits ready to be full-time student teachers.

Participants in the SMARTT project will obtain subject-area certification or teacher certification through eight existing state-approved alternative teacher certification programs. Both on-site and on-line mentoring are part of the SMARTT project as well as evaluation and financial support through scholarships, stipends, and other financial incentives. Mentoring and coaching activities will continue for the three years that participants and new teachers hold an initial educator license.

“High quality training and mentoring are vital to the career success of teachers who educate our children,” Burmaster noted. “Grant activities are being designed with maximum flexibility to ensure prospective educators and participating districts successfully attain the goals of the grant. Putting quality educators in every classroom is an important part of our efforts to provide a quality education for every child.”

All recruits, those who don’t already hold a teaching license, must pass the PRAXIS I and II exams. These national exams test basic skills, general and subject-specific knowledge, and teaching skills. Passing both exams is required of all pre-service teachers in Wisconsin. As a grant partner, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Department of Continuing Education will help SMARTT recruits prepare to take the exams through on-site or on-line preparation activities.

Wisconsin is the only state education department among 14 agencies chosen for U.S. Department of Education Transition to Teaching grants totaling \$6.8 million. Local and regional programs in California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, and North Carolina also received grant awards.

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NOTES: A list of participating school districts and state-approved alternative certification programs that are part of the Support for Mid-Career Advancement and Retention through Transition-to-Teaching (SMARTT) Project follows. This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2009_54.pdf.

Transition-to-Teaching Grant

Support for Mid-Career Advancement and Retention through Transition-to-Teaching Project

Lead Applicant

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction - \$2,202,565
\$440,513 per year for five years – Train 100 teachers over five years

School District Partners

Augusta
Bayfield
Beloit
Bowler
Cashton
Crandon
Glidden
Granton Area
Hillsboro
Menominee Indian
Northwood
Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton
Royall
Wausaukee
Weston

State-approved Alternative Teacher Certification Programs

CESA 1 Proficiency-Based Licensure, Brookfield
CESA 6 Residency in Teacher Education, Oshkosh
CESA 7 Teach Development Center, Green Bay
Concordia University Wisconsin Teacher Training, Mequon
Milwaukee Teacher Education Center
NORDA Inc. 10SPED, Hayward
NORDA Inc. Project Teaching, Ladysmith
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Alternative Careers in Teaching

Collaborating Partner

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Department of Continuing Education PRAXIS Program