

Enhancing Education through Technology Program: 2003-04

REIS04-183-4

At a Glance

The Instructional Technology (IT) department of the Dallas Independent School District managed the Title II, Part D, Enhancing Education Through Technology (Ed Tech Program) grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education for the 2003-2004 school year. The grant provided \$1,402,297 to the district to be used to facilitate improvements in the use of technology as part of educational delivery strategies employed by the district. The grant ran from July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004. The IT department applied the funding to six major program areas within the district: the Teacher Laptop Program (TLP), the TLP Tech Prep Institute (Tech Prep), Texas Computer Education Association (TCEA) Scholarships, the Masters Across Technology (MAT) tuition program, the Curriculum Revision for Computer Literacy middle school program, and to fund Katapulz Incorporated to provide technology consulting for selected campuses. Each of these programs was carefully integrated into a districtwide plan to fully prepare both teachers and students to embrace technology in the school, workplace and home.

Program Components

Teacher Laptop Program. DISD provided over 9,432 teachers and librarians with laptop computers. Another 989 had qualified for a laptop, but had not claimed their computer at the time of this report. The TLP facilitated the district's having made provisions for lesson plans and grade books to be on-line through *Project Oasis* beginning with the 2004-2005 school year. Curriculum and software downloads were also available from the Oasis website. Teachers were also provided email addresses. Email addresses were expected to help alleviate some of the problems encountered by parents and others trying to contact teachers during the school day.

Teachers and librarians must have passed a Level 1 Technology Proficiency test before being issued laptops. The grant paid for the laptops

themselves, and for two staff members to develop and manage the laptop acquisition and distribution aspects of the program.

TLP Tech Prep Institute. Not all teachers were able to pass the Level 1 Technology Proficiency test without training, and some did not have the resources to become proficient on their own. The TLP Tech Prep Institute was a two-day training workshop designed by IT department specialists to instill in teachers the basic competencies required to pass the Level 1 Technology Proficiency test. Teachers had the option of taking the proficiency test without attending the Tech Prep Institute. Teachers earning a satisfactory score on the proficiency test were not required to attend the Tech Prep Institute. TPI was offered 8 times throughout the year and 71% of teachers who completed the course and elected to be tested at that time, passed.

TCEA Scholarships. The TCEA Scholarships program paid for 87 DISD Teacher Technologists to attend the annual state conference held at the Austin Convention Center in Austin, Texas on February 2-6, 2004. The scholarship program provided \$300 per person to help defray registration, hotel and other costs for each attending teacher.

When asked about the most innovative products at the convention, teachers cited products by eInstruction, Whiteboard or Smartboard products, Microsoft offerings, a variety of handheld technology suppliers and products by Adobe Acrobat.

When asked what they would be willing to share with colleagues at a Teacher Tech or after-school training session, attendees most frequently said that they would be willing to present a workshop on integrating technology into the classroom.

Teachers were asked to list the product, service or training presented at the conference that

could most benefit DISD. The leading responses to this question were eInstruction and Smartboard or Whiteboard offerings.

When asked about projects that another Texas school district had implemented that might be beneficial to DISD, teachers most frequently recommended that there be both a full-time computer teacher and a full time technologist. According to DISD conference attendees, many school districts throughout Texas had technologist positions unencumbered by regularly scheduled teaching duties.

The conference attendees from DISD listed 51 different websites as being potentially useful and helpful additions to the Instructional Technology department website as links.

Masters Across Technology. The University of North Texas has developed and offered a masters program designed to help teachers obtain the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) Technology Certificate, a Master Teacher designation and to complete a Computer Education and Cognitive Systems (CECS) Master's degree, Teaching and Learning with Technology, by following a single carefully designed curriculum of graduate study. The grant provided funds for about 21 teachers to each take 3 courses within the program during the 2003-2004 school year.

Curriculum Revision for Computer Literacy. The required middle school computer literacy curriculum was completely replaced by this program. The revised literacy curriculum featured all new software, scope and sequence and lesson plans. The curriculum featured training in basic computer skills. The curriculum also featured more advanced training with software such as *Windows XP*, *Word*, *Excel*, *Inspiration 7.5 (a graphics application)*, *Access*, and *PowerPoint*. In addition, the curriculum included training in network accessing and navigation.

Katapulz. DISD contracted with Katapulz, a provider of technology support services with corporate offices in Austin, Texas. Three schools were intended to feature Katapulz provided support in 2003-2004, Bryan Adams and A. Maceo Smith High Schools, and Stockard Middle School. Due to the resignation of one specialist, Stockard Middle School did not receive services the entire school year.

Summary

The DISD Instructional Technology department used grant monies to fund six vital technology needs within the district during the 2003-2004 school year. Grant funding was instrumental in the provision of more than 9,000 high performance laptop computers to teachers and media specialists through the Teacher Laptop Program. Training was provided through the TLP Tech Prep Institute to those teachers needing extra help to satisfactorily complete the Level 1 Proficiency assessment, a requirement for participation in the laptop program.

TCEA scholarships, supplemented by grant funds made it possible for teacher technologists to attend the annual meeting of the TCEA in Austin, Texas during February of 2004.

Grant funding supplemented the Masters Across Technology program, furthering the academic progress of 21 teachers on the road to their Computer Education and Cognitive Systems Master's degrees. The Masters Across Technology program also leaves participants well situated to sit for additional certifications, including the examination for Master Teacher status in Texas.

The Curriculum Revision for Computer Literacy project completely revised the middle school computer literacy curriculum. This massive rewriting of the curriculum was occasioned by the replacement of all hardware and software in the middle school labs, requiring new curriculum and Scope and Sequence documents to guide and support teachers as they deliver instruction to students.

The Katapulz program provided badly needed support to teachers at two high schools where support from skilled computer technologists was in particularly high demand.

The funds provided through the Title II, Part D, Enhancing Education Through Technology grant program were a crucial element allowing the Instructional Technology department to deliver critical services to teachers, media specialists and teacher technologists in 2003-2004.