



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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# **NLMUSD Awarded \$3 Million Grant to Enhance Science Instruction**

Norwalk-La Mirada will spend a newly announced \$3 million grant to strengthen science instruction through a collaborative partnership formed with California State University, Long Beach dubbed the Science Professional Academy.

The grant is part of \$18.2 million California Mathematics and Science Partnership grants awarded this month to 28 school districts to improve instruction for disadvantaged youths. Norwalk-La Mirada is one of five districts to receive the highest level of funding.

"This generous grant will not only enhance teaching methods, it will also augment content knowledge as our teachers tackle the state's new and highly rigorous science standards," Interim District Superintendent Ginger Shattuck said.

The district's application outlined plans for the Science Professional Academy, which will provide K-8 teachers with deeper science content knowledge and additional instructional strategies for optimizing student understanding and greater achievement in science education.

"Research shows the single most important factor for student achievement is the quality of the teacher in the classroom, but elementary teacher prep courses don't necessarily provide enough content when it comes to science instruction," Shattuck said.

The professional learning will be a collaborative effort with CSULB Science Education Department and CSULB scientists who provide course work and training to district teacher leaders.

Shannon Baker, District Coordinator for Curriculum and Instruction, said this is the first time that NLMUSD has participated in the competition for the Mathematics and Science Partnership grants, a federal program administered by the state. To qualify for the grant, at least 40 percent of a district's students must be low-income.

"I'm thrilled with the news and excited about the opportunity this grant represents for our teachers and students," said Baker, who helped prepare the grant application.

State Department of Education officials highlighted the higher-education partnership and the emphasis on teacher collaboration as two key aspects earning NLMUSD's grant proposal the maximum level of support, Baker said.

"We designed our grant project specifically to help support the transition to the new Next Generation Science Standards and to build capacity for a strong, foundational science education for our students as they move into high school," she said.

The funding is designated at \$10,000 per teacher for up to 100 teachers and \$1 million annually for up to three years. NLMUSD was approved for the maximum amount.

Grant funds will be used to send elementary and middle school teachers to a two-week intensive summer training course, with continued professional learning throughout the year to include two professional learning days and two cycles of teacher learning collaboratives.

Summer training will focus on Earth science, bringing in links to chemistry, biology, physics and engineering. As part of the summer training, teachers will work with the geoscience faculty at CSULB to explore the topics taught in class. In addition, participants will be paid a \$1,500 stipend and tuition for two graduate level science courses through the university.

Board of Education President Jesse Urquidi said it is difficult for districts to fund the ideal level of professional development without outside funding.

"Professional development requires resources to provide time for teachers to attend workshops, and have time to plan together. While the district has been supporting our teachers to the best of our ability, this grant pushes that work in the key area of science instruction to the next level," Urquidi said.

Science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) instruction is crucial to California's future. The number of STEM jobs in the past decade has grown three times as quickly as other fields; experts believe that trend will continue into the next decade.

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