

News Release

Everett Public Schools

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District awarded \$616,000 grant for middle and high school science

Over the next three years, all of Everett Public Schools 60 middle and high school science teachers will be involved in the *Everett Science Partnership: Observing and Improving Student Learning*. Everett Public Schools partnered with the Center for Inquiry Science, the University of Washington, and Seattle Pacific University in applying for the \$616,000 Math Science Partnership grant.

The program's goal is to increase academic science learning for students in grades 6-12. To achieve that end, every district middle and high school science teacher will attend one of three summer institutes with school principals between now and 2011. Each will also work throughout the school year with science teachers from around the district on science lessons and methods to assess how well students are learning. Teachers will work hand-in-hand with college and university research scientists. Up to 9,000 students will be impacted each year during the three years of the grant, but "tens of thousands of students will benefit from the work done over the next three years to bring teachers from across the district together to focus on the grant's goals," said Interim Superintendent Karst Brandsma when he announced the grant at this week's school board meeting.

Besides helping students achieve in science, the grant is designed to improve how well middle and high school teachers are prepared to teach challenging science materials and to increase their practice of doing so. The program will also strengthen the district infrastructure that supports teaching and learning science.

"We know that well-prepared teachers are key to students learning well," said district Science Resource Center Director Bob Sotak. "This grant makes it possible for science teachers around the district to spend intensive learning time together, to implement what they learn, to collaborate to improve how they are teaching, and to assess what students are learning and adjust to meet student learning needs."

According to Sotak, a similar program has been used in the Seattle School District. "The students there improved in science dramatically. We are starting the program in Everett Public Schools with students at a higher achievement rate than when Seattle started, and we expect our gains to be even greater." The program's design is not unknown to a number of Everett middle school teachers who have been piloting the program this year. "We've seen the impacts of the program at each of the schools involved in the pilot and are in a great position to expand to all secondary schools this summer," said Sotak.

The Center for Inquiry Science at the Institute for Systems Biology, the lead grant partner, has a well-established relationship with Everett Public Schools, including a 12-year partnership with the district's science resource center director and six years of working with district teachers. "The University of Washington and Seattle Pacific University provide two lead scientists, each with scientific research expertise in the physical sciences as well as decades of experience in deepening science curriculum in the state," said Sotak.

Also, the project management team will work with external evaluators, using ongoing data to measure the program's success and determine needed changes over time. Ultimately the plan will analyze what is most effective to help students learn to high standards, for teachers to inspire high-level learning, for school administrators to build support and systems to make such learning and teaching possible, and for partner scientists to best work to ensure that teachers have access to the latest scientific knowledge and resources.

"To say we are excited, is an understatement," said Sotak. "Particularly in times of budget cuts and reductions, this infusion of dollars to maintain and accelerate our science program, is much appreciated."