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Grants totaling \$9 million awarded to Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics academies and centers

AUSTIN – Competitive grants totaling about \$9 million are being awarded to create seven additional Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (T-STEM) academies and five regional T-STEM centers, Commissioner of Education Shirley J. Neeley announced today.

T-STEM is a \$71 million initiative designed to improve instruction and academic performance in science and math related subjects in Texas secondary schools. T-STEM was developed by the Texas High School Project (THSP), a \$261 million public-private initiative committed to increasing graduation rates and college enrollment rates in every Texas community.

The THSP's partners include the Texas Education Agency, Office of the Governor, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, Wallace Foundation, educators, and others. The philanthropic investments are managed primarily by Communities Foundation of Texas and the public resources by the Texas Education Agency.

“The T-STEM initiative focuses our efforts where they are needed most – in areas where there are a high number of disadvantaged students who are too often left in the shadows of opportunity,” Gov. Rick Perry said. “This initiative will help us close the science and math gap that exists in our schools today before it becomes a salary gap for tomorrow’s workers, and an opportunity gap for Texas families.”

The resources dedicated to the THSP support new and re-designed high schools, educator training and development, and specific programs designed to help students get ready for college. The approach used by the THSP creates learning environments where students build relationships with educators, are challenged with rigorous lessons, and are excited by subjects made relevant to their lives.

“The T-STEM grants will help lay the groundwork to dramatically improve math and science instruction in Texas. The academies will use innovative approaches to improve education in these critical areas and then the centers and the T-STEM network will share this new information with other schools throughout the state,” Neeley said.

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Three implementation grants awarded

Three implementation grants to open T-STEM academies this fall are being awarded to Burnham Wood Charter School in El Paso, New Deal Independent School District (ISD) in Lubbock County, and YES College Preparatory Schools in Houston.

T-STEM academies are a mix of charter schools, traditional public schools, and smaller learning communities that will act as demonstration schools and learning labs to develop innovative ways to improve math and science instruction. The academies are open enrollment, focusing on the most at-risk areas in Texas, and will limit enrollment to no more than 100 students per grade.

Burnham Wood Charter School, which is opening a new campus that will serve grades 6-12, received a grant award of \$700,000. YES College Preparatory Schools also received \$700,000 to convert its Southeast campus, which serves grades 6-12, into a T-STEM academy. New Deal ISD, which will be creating a small learning community serving grades 9-12 at New Deal High School, received \$80,000.

Four start-up grants awarded

Start-up grants for T-STEM academies were awarded to Northeast ISD in San Antonio; Richardson ISD; Dallas ISD and Corpus Christi ISD. The four start-up grantees will use the upcoming school year as a planning year and will open the academies in the fall of 2007.

Northeast ISD, which is creating academies at Nimitz Middle School and Lee High School, and Corpus Christi ISD, which is creating academies at Cunningham Middle School and Moody High School, are each receiving grants of \$750,000.

Richardson will create a T-STEM academy at Berkner High School, and Dallas will create an academy at Conrad High School. Each of these districts is receiving a grant of \$480,000.

Prior T-STEM Academy Grants

Previous T-STEM academy grant award winners include Manor ISD near Austin; Harmony Science Charter School with campuses in El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio; Waxahachie ISD, and KIPP, Inc. in Houston.

Manor ISD and Harmony Science Charter School will open T-STEM academies in the fall 2006. Waxahachie ISD and KIPP, Inc. will open academies in the fall of 2007.

Three T-STEM academy grants were awarded in the fall of 2005 to early innovators: A.J. Moore Academy in Waco ISD; Carver High School in Aldine ISD; and the Academy of Irving in Irving ISD.

Ultimately, 35 T-STEM academies will be created around the state. Additional T-STEM academy grant opportunities will be available in the future.

Five T-STEM centers

An equally important part of this initiative is the creation of five regional T-STEM centers, which will develop new science, technology, engineering and math instructional materials. They will also provide professional development training to teachers and school

leaders, and will evaluate the practices used at T-STEM academies to identify successful practices that can be duplicated in other schools.

The fiscal agents for the five centers are: Education Service Center (ESC) Region 13 in Austin; Texas Tech University; Texas A&M University; the University of Texas at El Paso and Education Service Center Region 1 in Edinburg. Each is being awarded a grant of \$1 million.

Each fiscal agent will have a number of partners in this effort and will use the 2006-2007 school year as a planning year and will open in 2007.

Following are the partners for each fiscal agent:

- Education Service Center Region 1 – partnering with the University of Texas-Pan American; 13 school districts in Region 1 and the Charles A. Dana Center.
- Education Service Center Region 13 – partnering with Education Service Center 20 in San Antonio; the University of Texas at Austin School of Engineering; San Antonio ISD; and Taylor ISD.
- Texas A&M – partnering with Dallas ISD and Education Service Center Region 10 in Richardson.
- Texas Tech – partnering with Lubbock ISD; Education Service Center Regions 15, 16, 17 and 18, which are housed in San Angelo, Amarillo, Lubbock and Midland, respectively.
- University of Texas at El Paso – partnering with 12 school districts in the El Paso area and Education Service Center Region 19 in El Paso.

Best practices identified by the academies and centers will be shared through a T-STEM network that will be developed during 2006 and launched in 2007. Through the networks, schools across Texas will have access to relevant professional development, a rigorous math and science curriculum, lesson plans infused with real-world activities in math and science, and advice from peers and experts.

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