



Quality Education Investment Act embodies a new approach to interventions

During March 2007, hundreds of low-performing schools can line up to apply for state support through California's latest intervention program—the Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA). The program provides more money to help these schools meet performance and resource benchmarks. This brief explains the selection and funding processes, details the expectations for schools and districts, and discusses issues potential applicants will need to consider.

QEIA provides from \$500 to \$1,000 per student depending on grade level

The state will allocate close to \$2.7 billion over the life of this seven-year program. Participating schools will receive \$500 for each K–3 pupil, \$900 for each student in grades 4–8, and \$1,000 for each high school student per year beginning in 2008–09. (Two-thirds of this amount will be provided in 2007–08, a planning and preparation year.) K–3 students receive less because a large component of QEIA is smaller class sizes, and the vast majority of K–3 students are in classes of 20 or fewer due to the state's Class Size Reduction Program.

Schools are required to integrate QEIA funds into their Single Plan for Pupil Achievement, in which they document how they plan to direct a multitude of funding sources toward improving student performance.

Eligibility is based on school performance

Like the rest of California's intervention programs, eligibility for QEIA is based on school performance. It targets schools in the bottom 20% of the 2005 Academic Performance Index (API) rankings whether or not they are making progress. Schools that have not exited the High Priority Schools Grant Program (HPSGP) are also eligible, though they will have to undergo a "rigorous review" of their educational program before being

accepted and must meet the requirements of both programs. Altogether more than 1,450 regular public schools and charter schools are eligible, but funding is enough for only 450 to 500 schools, according to the California Department of Education (CDE). Schools chosen for the program are expected to represent a proportionate number of students at each grade span—a total of about 500,000 students, according to State Board of Education staff. Selected schools are also supposed to be distributed geographically. The state's plan is to choose at least one school in each county.

Local school boards are expected to hold a hearing before submitting their applications, which are due by March 30. Grantees will be selected by May and 80% of funding for next year awarded as of July 1, 2007 (the other 20% in January 2008). Selection will occur through a random draw of schools nominated by district superintendents, with geographical and grade-level considerations taken into account. (In districts with multiple eligible schools, superintendents determine priority for funding no matter which school wins the random draw.)

QEIA sets benchmarks

QEIA sets benchmarks for performance and a variety of resource measures that schools and districts must meet in ways that work best for them. Schools must exceed their API targets averaged over the first three years of full funding and meet annual targets thereafter. They must also agree to teacher qualification criteria. Schools will lose funding if they do not reach their three-year goals by 2010–11. They are also expected to meet two interim benchmarks.

QEIA offers a standard program, which will fund at least 85% of the participating students, and an alternative program, which will cover up to 15% of pupils in QEIA schools. (See the box on page 2.) Schools participating in the standard program must agree to specific staffing requirements.

QEIA funds are part of a legal settlement

Supported by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, and the California Teachers Association (CTA), QEIA is the result of an out-of-court settlement in 2006.

In the lawsuit, CTA and O'Connell alleged that the state had not met its financial obligations in past years under both Proposition 98 (the minimum funding guarantee for K–12 schools and community colleges) and Senate Bill 1101 (2004). The latter measure—often referred to as "the deal"—set Proposition 98 funding at \$2 billion below what it otherwise would have been. When state revenues rose, education advocates argued that the state owed K–14 education a total of about \$3 billion for 2004–05 and 2005–06.

To settle the matter, the state agreed to repay the \$3 billion (which increased the Proposition 98 base) over seven years beginning in 2007–08. K–12 education's close to \$2.7 billion share will be distributed through the QEIA program. Community colleges will receive roughly \$320 million over the same period to support career technical education.

In addition to the settlement money, state revenues were higher than anticipated in 2005–06, allowing lawmakers to add another \$2.3 billion to the Proposition 98 base that was not earmarked for QEIA.

The standard program emphasizes more adults per student

Elementary schools that seek a QEIA grant must participate in the existing K–3 Class Size Reduction program. Schools with self-contained classrooms in grades 4–8 and/or classrooms for grades 4–12 in which core academic subjects are taught (English, math, science, social science) must provide an average class size that is the lesser of:

- 25 pupils per classroom per grade *or*
- five pupils fewer than the school's 2006–07 classroom average; however, if the 2005–06

The alternative program does not require lower class sizes

Under QEIA, up to 15% of pupils can be in schools that participate in an alternative program. The selection process for these schools will also be based on a random draw, but priority will be given to high schools that cannot decrease class size because of extraordinary facility issues.

These schools do not have to lower class sizes, and high schools do not have to provide a counselor for every 300 students. But the application is more involved and must show how the alternative program will improve learning and be consistent with sound, scientifically based research. These schools must also reach the same API targets and teacher qualification requirements as the standard program.

How can I find out more?

For information on QEIA, including a list of eligible schools, go to: www.cde.ca.gov/ta/lp/qe

To learn more about California's intervention programs, see the EdSource publication, *Worthy Goals, Limited Success: Intervention Programs in California (2/07)* at: www.edsource.org

Our thanks to School Services of California, Inc., www.sscal.com, for sharing with us information from the QEIA workshops they jointly present with the California School Boards Association (CSBA), www.csba.org.

classroom average was less than 25, then that year's average will be used.

In addition, classes of more than 27 pupils are prohibited, and non-core classes may not be larger than their 2005–06 size.

Besides ensuring more teachers per pupil, QEIA high schools must provide at least one

counselor for every 300 students. That counselor must have a services credential with a specialization in Pupil Personnel Services. (For many years, California has ranked at the bottom among the states in the ratio of guidance counselors to students. In 2006–07 policymakers appropriated \$200 million to bolster the number of counselors serving students in grades 7–12.)

Attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers is key for both programs

Schools in both programs must ensure that their teachers are highly qualified based on federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) criteria. The average teacher experience level must also meet or exceed the average level at other schools of its type in the district. To ensure that this happens, the superintendent of public instruction is expected to develop a Teacher Experience Index by June 30, 2007 that will be based on 2005–06 data from the teacher assignment form collected by the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS).

Experience beyond 10 years counts as 10 years. This means that schools cannot meet the requirement by having one highly experienced teacher and several beginning ones.

Districts are expected to be full partners with schools in QEIA

County offices of education will monitor schools for their progress on benchmarks. In addition, districts are expected to play a strong role in this program. As a condition of their schools' participation, districts must:

- Complete an academic review for each participating school;
- Ensure that school administrators have exemplary qualifications and provide professional development;
- Provide fiscal and evaluation data for annual reviews by the superintendent of public instruction;

- Consult with union representatives;
- Ensure that QEIA funding is spent on QEIA schools;
- Ensure teacher experience levels are met and professional development—defined broadly to include such activities as time to collaborate or analyze pupil data—is provided at an average of 40 hours per year per teacher;
- Meet all requirements (such as for facilities and textbooks) under the *Williams* lawsuit settlement;
- Focus on conditions that improve instruction and achievement.

Districts and schools have a number of issues to consider

Some districts may have only one school that would be eligible for a QEIA grant. In fact, seven counties have only one school each that qualifies. But considering that funds are limited statewide, administrators in districts with more than one candidate that wants to participate in the new program will need to prioritize the eligible schools, perhaps based on need or on a school's ability to use the funding well.

With class size such a significant part of the QEIA program, schools that want to apply for a standard grant also have to consider how to handle teacher recruitment and an increased strain on facilities. The 2007–08 funding component can be used to meet some, but probably not all, facility needs.

In addition, QEIA requires districts to consult with union representatives for both teachers and classified employees. Particularly on the important goal of attracting highly qualified teachers to these low-performing schools, incentives—such as higher salaries or better working conditions—would likely have to be bargained.

Finally, QEIA authorizes funding through 2013–14. At this point, it is unclear whether schools that are successful under QEIA will continue to receive additional support from the state. 



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