



Illinois State Board of Education

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NEWS

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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State Board of Education honors graduates of bilingual teaching program committed to teaching high need schools

Graduates earning master's degree; Majority switching careers—former photographer, options trader and social worker now training to be teachers

SPRINGFIELD — The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) today honored another 13 graduates of the federally-funded Bilingual Transition to Teaching Project (BTTT) with a board resolution. These mid-career professionals and recent college graduates will receive a master's degree in education from Northern Illinois University (NIU) in May and are now working with bilingual and English as Second Language (ESL) students inside several Chicago and suburban classrooms.

"I applaud the commitment of these individuals for embarking on their new and rewarding career path," said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch, Ed. D. "There is a growing need for qualified bilingual teachers in the state."

The BTTT project offers a unique avenue to teacher certification for people who want to change careers and become highly-qualified certified bilingual/ESL teachers. The program allows future teachers to complete the same education requirements as traditionally certified teachers, but instead of traditional student teaching, BTTT program participants receive on-the-job training as full-time bilingual teachers.

"It has been hard work but enjoyable at the same time," said graduate Bertha Vasquez, a first-grade bilingual teacher. "It is an honor and a privilege to participate in the program and best of all we are all working in a field where we want to be."

Participants who successfully complete the program earn a master's of science in education and meet Illinois' requirements for elementary teacher certification with bilingual and ESL approvals. Students in the program are also committed to teaching in a high-need school district for three years. In return, their master's level coursework for the degree at NIU is tuition-free. The three-year commitment typically coincides with ongoing coursework. The BTTT Project also provides participants with high quality professional development designed to have a positive impact on classroom instruction, before and while teaching.

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Many of this year's graduates started in the classroom immediately when the program began in fall 2005. Some of them came into the program with an education background as a substitute teacher or social worker. Other occupations included photographer, options trader, software developer and an electronics engineer.

The program is funded by a five-year grant that was awarded to ISBE in 2004 by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. The goal is to recruit and retain approximately 200 professionals into elementary bilingual education. Grant partners include the Illinois Resource Center, NIU, Chicago Public Schools District 299, and 11 other Chicago and suburban districts.

The partner districts are:

- Chicago Heights School District 170
- Calumet City School District 155
- Cicero Elementary School District 99
- Harvey Public School District 152
- Joliet Public School District 86
- North Chicago School District 187
- Posen-Robbins School District 143 ½
- Summit School District 104
- Waukegan Community School District 60
- W. Harvey-Dixmoor School District 147
- Zion Elementary School District 6

All 12 partnering school districts serve at least 10,000 or more students; serve more than 20 percent low-income students, based on USDE criteria; and have a 2.5 percent rate of teachers on emergency or provisional certificates.

This is the second BTTT grant awarded to ISBE. The first grant ended in 2005 and partnered with CPS, Waukegan, Cicero, Rockford District 205 and East Aurora District 131. Currently, there are 156 people in seven other groups working to complete the program.

The 13 graduates and where they teach are:

- Ariel Valles – Seward Academy, Chicago Public Schools District 299
- Bertha Elvia Vasquez – Liberty School, Cicero Elementary School District 99
- Braulio Fernández Chávez – Alessandro Elementary School, Chicago Public Schools District 299
- Brian Calhoun – Graeme Stewart Elementary, Chicago Public Schools District 299
- Elvia Hernandez – Columbia Explorers Academy, Chicago Public Schools District 299
- Fernando Siles – W.E.B. Dubois Elementary School, Chicago Public Schools District 299
- George Mauricio Proaño – Socorro Sandoval School, Chicago Public Schools District 299
- Gerardo Argueta – Clinton Elementary, Chicago Public Schools District 299
- Jeffery Alan Aigner – Albany Park Multicultural Academy, Chicago Public Schools District 299
- John Melville Grosseohme – John H. Hamline, Chicago Public Schools District 299

- Mayteé Nazik Manas – Hanson Park Elementary, Chicago Public Schools District 299
- Sergio Hernandez Jr. – Lazaro Cardenas School, Chicago Public Schools District 299
- Timothy Michael Snow – Graves Heritage Middle School, Summit School District 104

For more information about the Bilingual Transition to Teaching program, visit <http://www.transitiontoteaching.com/>.

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