

SFUSD Awarded \$525,000 Federal Language Education Grant

San Francisco, CA. November 17, 2003: The United States Department of Education this month announced the award of a three-year, \$525,000 (total value) FLAG grant to fund the Multicultural Tapestry Project at Hoover Middle School.

What is the Nature of the Grant?

The U.S. Department of Education solicited grant proposals for projects designed to promote foreign language education in public schools - hence the term FLAG, or Foreign Language Assistance Grant. The specific restrictions of the grant, and the stated objective criteria for evaluation, were such that the unique Immersion Language programs of the SFUSD were virtually ideal candidates for funding.

The Grant is funded over a period of three years. The maximum possible amount that could be awarded was \$175,000 per year for three years, or \$525,000. The Department of Education also required a sizable matching contribution from the SFUSD, which was addressed by the District's current commitment of staff and resources to the language programs.

It is anticipated that the funds will be disbursed in early November 2003.

Who Wrote the Grant?

With support from SFUSD and Hoover Middle School administrators, the grant was written by a volunteer group of parents and educators. The project team was led by Laura Gold and Linda Lau of Parents for Immersion Education, based at Hoover Middle School, and instructors Christina Yan and Fan Fang, teachers at Hoover Middle School and Lincoln High School respectively. Laura Gold has a child in the 7th grade Spanish Immersion Program at Hoover Middle School. Also as the Title VII coordinator at Buena Vista Elementary School, she has extensive experience and knowledge in immersion education. Her leadership was invaluable to this project.

What are Language Immersion Programs and the Multicultural Tapestry Project?

Over twenty years ago, SFUSD established an innovative "immersion" language acquisition program in its schools. The goal was to promote foreign language acquisition by native English speaking students by placing them in a school environment in which they would be "immersed" in another language and culture for virtually all of their school day. The program was conceived to take the children from K through 12th grades. The language program is primarily designed and targeted for English speakers to learn a second language.

The Immersion programs began at West Portal Elementary School with a small class of Cantonese (a wide-spread dialect of Chinese) learners, and at Buena Vista Elementary School with Spanish learners. The remarkable academic successes and popularity of these programs led to the development of similar programs in Spanish and Korean at many other elementary schools in the District and other parts of the United States – a key factor in the success of the proposal.

The Tapestry Project is designed to support the Japanese Bilingual Enrichment, Chinese Immersion and Spanish Immersion programs at Herbert Hoover Middle School in the Sunset

District. The grant will directly benefit nearly 200 students at Hoover, and many more in the next three years to come. Affiliated elementary and secondary schools will also benefit. The Project will pay for additional teachers, paraprofessional tutors, new computer labs, Web-based educational initiatives with schools across the globe, professional training and development, and urgently needed specialized teaching supplies (e.g. textbooks, dictionaries and video resources in the target languages). There will be a concerted effort to promote cross-cultural learning with all three programs, and to promote the awareness of the general school communities of the unique benefits of Immersion education.

Significance of the Grant

The SFUSD is experiencing severe budget problems, and will continue to suffer from these problems for some time. These problems pose a serious threat to the quality of the education in our schools at every level and in every substantive area. Cutbacks threaten the existence of many cherished and worthwhile programs, from PE to Band.

Immersion education, a proven model for success in virtually every application, now has the opportunity to assure and improve the quality of the education that it delivers to SFUSD children at Hoover Middle School for many years. Ultimately, this grant will have a positive impact extending well beyond the three years of stated funding. The effects of the finding will spread beyond that of Hoover to the benefit of the children at its feeder schools and downstream high schools.

For more information about this Multicultural Tapestry project, please contact Christina Yan at (415) 759-2783 or Laura Gold at (415) 695-5875 or (415)531-6430 (cell).