The CATESOL Journal

CATESOL EXCHANGE

What Options Exist for Funding Content-Based Programs?

MARGUERITE ANN SNOW
California State University, Los Angeles

Implementing innovative programs at all levels of instruction requires significant resources. Content-based instruction is no exception. While we have seen examples in this issue of individual teachers or teams of teachers who have created content-based courses for their students, the majority of the programs described require both administrative support and funding. Realistically, the implementation of content-based programs requires more than the usual resources, and we must, therefore, seek funding sources to cover expenses such as release time, consultant costs, materials, and other costs typically associated with such initiatives.

In this article, I will discuss options for funding content-based programs, giving examples of agencies which have funded such activities and making suggestions for writing grant proposals. While I will concentrate on external funding options, many of the strategies I suggest apply equally well to securing internal monies, and I encourage those interested to first seek funding sources within their schools and institutions. Even in these tight-budget times, there are funds available for special programs. The key is to devise content-based program proposals which meet the criteria for these special programs or which specifically match the needs of students targeted for such programs. For instance, the Freshman Summer Program at UCLA which Donna Brinton and I have reported on extensively addresses the needs of an administration concerned about persistence rates of high risk students, including ESL students.

Funding Options

When considering funding possibilities, both private and public sources should be taken into account. A number of highly successful content-based projects have been financed by private sources. The high school project reported on by Eva Wegrzecka-Monkiewicz in this issue is funded in part by the Rockefeller Foundation. This past fall, the ARCO and the XEROX Foundations underwrote a two-day

workshop on integrating language and content instruction for 30 math, science, and social studies junior high school teachers from the Los Angeles Unified School District. On the East coast, the Carnegie Corporation has actively supported several projects at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC, including the development of the *Prealgebra Lexicon,* a resource manual showing ESL teachers how to incorporate content into their language instruction and sensitizing math teachers to the language of math. Together with the Xerox Foundation, Carnegie funds also made possible the development of the teacher-training video "Communicative Math and Science Teaching."[1] It has been my experience that private agencies are very interested in funding projects in California which serve language minority students as they see our state as a mirror of the country's future. Furthermore, with the current national debate on education and the call in *America 2000* for partnerships with private industry, many foundations and private agencies are eager for the visibility which comes from funding innovative educational projects.

There are, of course, many funding options from public sources, most notably from state and federal agencies. The Cañada College adjunct program discussed by Peter Master in this issue was funded by a grant from the Underrepresented Students Special Project Fund of the Chancellor's Office of the California Community College District. At the federal level, ESEA Title VII funds from the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA), U.S. Department of Education, are designated for the improvement of instruction of limited English proficient (LEP) students in elementary and secondary schools. The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), another branch of the U.S. Department of Education, is another federal funding source. The Fund was established in 1972 to support a wide variety of improvement efforts for disadvantaged students thoughout the whole range of postsecondary education, including: public and private two- and four-year colleges and universities, accredited and nonaccredited; community organizations, libraries, and museums; nonprofit trade and technical schools; unions, consortia, student groups, local government agencies; and nonprofit corporations and associations.

The preceding list is certainly not exhaustive; it provides but a glimpse of the funding options available for financing content-based programs. More information about these and other private and public funding sources is available through district offices and institutional contracts and grants offices.

Proposal Writing: Some Considerations

Writing grant proposals is a tedious, time-consuming process. Most agencies require extensive applications, and award programs are highly competitive. To improve the odds, I've compiled a few suggestions.

Expert Assistance

Seek guidance from specialists in your districts, agencies, or institutions or from colleagues who have had projects funded. Try to get copies of successful applications, and use these as models for your proposal. Even if the projects are conceptually very different, it is useful to look at the format to see how the different sections are laid out and how the objectives have been defined. The applications will also provide ideas about what to include in the implementation timeline and suggest possible designs for the evaluation component of the proposal.

Examine the budgets of these successful applications carefully. They should include cost breakdowns of major items such as consultant fees, instructor release time, secretarial assistance, conference travel, and overhead (most institutions will take a percentage of your grant!). The budget should also contain provisions for less expensive items which are often overlooked but tend to mount up—postage, long distance telephone calls, office supplies, photocopying, and so forth. When preparing your budget, you may also be required to take into account cost-of-living increases or staff and faculty raises which have already been approved or are pending. Finally, many agencies require both a budget and a budget narrative. By looking at sample applications, you can see how the two differ.

When allowed, make contact with the project officer at the agency to which you are applying. Project officers can help clarify technical questions about application requirements and, sometimes, they are even at liberty to make direct suggestions or comment on the strengths or weaknesses of your proposal. Even when this is not the case, they will often hint at the types of projects they or their agency are most interested in funding. A project officer from a federal funding agency recently expressed surprise to me at how seldom prospective applicants actually take her suggestions to heart and revise accordingly. Clearly, good listening skills and the ability to read between the lines are useful attributes in such conversations. In other cases, expert assistance is available through state and local agencies. For example, the Bilingual Education Office of the California State Department of Education provides materials to assist applicants in the writing of ESEA Title VII applications.[2]

Making Your Case

You must construct a case for your proposed project by documenting a critical need, demonstrating how the project meets this need, and detailing how you will determine the effectiveness of the project. In a recent successful proposal to FIPSE, for example, my codirector and I built our case around our campus demographics at CSULA, where 66% of our students come from non-English speaking home

backgrounds. We claimed that the majority of these students (who are U.S.-born language minority students) are not served by traditional ESL programs but nevertheless at risk in the undergraduate curriculum. To respond to the unmet needs of this population, we designed "Project LEAP: Learning-English-for-Academic-Purposes" which aims at improving the academic literacy skills of these students by redesigning the syllabi of selected general education courses and developing adjunct study groups which have a content and language dvelopment focus.

In addition to making your case using demographic and statistical data such as achievement scores, attrition rates, and the like, check to insure that your project has the built-in *multiplier effects* and results in the *capacity building* that funding agencies look for. In other words, agencies want to see that your project reaches the widest possible audience and that you insure in some concerted way its long-term impact, such as getting your institution to commit to funding the program after the grant expires. In certain circumstances, you may even try to convince the funding agency that your proposed program has the potential to be a self-supporting, money-making enterprise.

An attempt to achieve the multiplier effect can be seen in a Title VII project which has been implemented at six junior high schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The six schools, located in East Los Angeles, primarily serve language minority students from Hispanic backgrounds. In addition to other components of the project such as a peer-tutoring and parents-as-partners program, the project targets both ESL and subject matter teachers, familiarizing them with language development principles and promoting the integration of language and content instruction. Sixty project teachers from each of the six schools have agreed to specialize in specific topics such as cooperative learning, sheltered English, reciprocal teaching, journal writing, or study skills instruction. They attend workshops on these topics conducted by outside consultants, then return to their school sites to train their colleagues. This trainer of trainers model draws on Tharp and Gallimore's (1988) notion of teachers as "critical friends" by building in a peer-coaching component. Similarly, in the FIPSE project at CSULA which I described in the previous section, we are trying to insure the multiplier effect by producing training manuals and videotapes for each of the general education courses we redesign over the three years of project funding.

The objective is to guarantee that the impact of the project will arc beyond the project participants to a wider circle of influence. This serves to satisfy the funding agency that not only will its investment reach a wide audience, but new skills or capacities will be built which will remain well after the life of the grant.

Another consideration in successful grant writing involves decisions about key personnel. Often innovative programs are launched by an

energetic individual whose enthusiasm and hard work initially carry the project almost single-handedly. It is important, however, to maintain momentum throughout the duration of project funding. Failure to do so is often the ultimate downfall of innovative programs. In fact, in critiquing the early writing across the curriculum projects, Fulwiler and Young (1990) note that many of these programs, while very effective in the beginning, seemed to lose steam when the person who was the early source of inspiration lost interest, left the institution, or, for whatever reason, was no longer involved in the project. This experience should guide us in designing content-based programs that are as broadly based as possible in their administrative structure.

Collaboration

Most funding agencies look very favorably upon collaboration between institutions such as between elementary schools and the local college or university. In fact, many successful projects build in collaboration as a cornerstone of the program. For example, a FIPSE-funded project at Georgia State University is investigating the academic literacy demands of high school and university courses in the subject areas of history, English, political science, and biology. Once these demands are described, secondary and university faculty from across the disciplines will then discuss the findings in a series of workshops. From these discussions, collaborative teams will make plans for curricular modification at both levels of instruction with the aim of better preparing students for undergraduate course work. Building in this kind of collaboration has several advantages. It insures that the results of the study at the university will reach the high school teachers directly. It also sets up a forum for university and high school subject matter specialists to talk to each other, a rare opportunity indeed.

Clearly, collaboration can appear in many forms. Since content-based instruction, by its very definition, relies on the integration of language and content teaching, building in collaboration should be a central concern of project design. These channels of collaboration will both strengthen the project and increase its multiplier effect.

Evaluation and Research

With the increasing emphasis on accountability, most funding agencies require a comprehensive evaluation plan in the proposal. Even if you are not required to submit a detailed evaluation plan, it is still important to design the evaluation *before* beginning the project, not after the fact. Again, you should seek out experts in your district, agencies, and institutions to assist in the design of your evaluation plan.

I'd like to encourage readers to contribute to the growing research base in content-based instruction, in addition to carrying out effective program evaluations. More studies are needed like the one reported on in this issue by Valentine and Repath-Martos, who examined the needs, interest, and motivation of university students enrolled in content-based classes. Research efforts in content-based instruction recently received a boost at the national level when the U.S. Department of Education awarded a three-year contract to the Center for Applied Linguistics to conduct a descriptive study of content-ESL practices. The study will examine practices and programs for LEP students in which second language instruction is integrated with specific content instruction or throughout the curriculum. The purpose of the study is to identify the range of programs (kindergarten through grade 12) and the salient student, teacher, community, program, and other characteristics which are correlated with the existence and the effectiveness of content-ESL practices. An elaborate data collection program, including questionnaire and telephone and in-person interviews will be launched, in an attempt to discover not only the lone teacher using content-ESL practices but also more broadly based whole-school efforts across the country.[3]

In short, well-conceived and documented program evaluation and research studies will inform our pedagogical decisions and provide the evidence we need to convince both our own administrations and funding agencies of the efficacy of content-based instruction.

Conclusion

We have seen in this issue that content-based instruction as an approach offers the theoretical justification and practical results necessary to merit the investment of both internal and external funds. I encourage you to follow up on the suggestions presented here for seeking funding sources and to attempt the time-intensive, but often rewarding task of proposal writing. ■

Footnotes

1. The *Prealgebra Lexicon* and "Communicative Math and Science Teaching" (and an instructional guide) are available from the Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St., NW, Washington, DC 20037, (202) 429-9292.

2. "Preparing the Program Design" is available to assist prospective project directors with applications for a number of different ESEA, Title VII programs. The document describes key areas of program design such as goals, participants, and program rationale, and lists important questions that prospective project directors should consider. A copy of this document can be obtained by calling the Bilingual Education Office in Sacramento at (916) 323-6205.

3. If you or your school is using content-ESL practices, I'd be delighted to hear about them as part of the OBEMLA study. Please write to me at the School of Education, California State University, Los Angeles, 5151 State University Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90032.

References

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