



Colorado Teachers Improve Math Instruction With PBS TeacherLine® and Support From State's Department of Education

Colorado Department of Education Tuition Reimbursement Program provides financial assistance to teachers for PBS TeacherLine online professional development courses

ARLINGTON, Va. (April 11, 2008) – With the help of PBS TeacherLine® and the Colorado Department of Education, Colorado teachers are improving math education while meeting NCLB “highly qualified” teacher requirements, gaining graduate credits and increasing their salaries. PBS TeacherLine (www.pbs.org/teacherline) is the leading provider of online facilitated professional development courses for preK-12 educators in math, science, reading and language arts, instructional strategies, and instructional technology.

To provide more professional development opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals, and to assist them in achieving highly qualified status, the Colorado Department of Education, Office of Standards and Support, teamed up with PBS TeacherLine to offer online courses to educators in the state. In support of teachers’ continuing education, the Department started the Tuition Reimbursement Program to provide financial assistance to educators upon successful completion of PBS TeacherLine courses. The Department reimburses teachers \$100 per course to offset the cost of enrollment. In addition, teachers can receive Colorado Department of Education recertification credit and earn graduate credit from Adams State College.

According to the 2008 “Foundations for Success: The Final Report of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel,” teachers need to have a solid grasp of mathematics and how students develop mathematical knowledge and skills. Additionally, the Panel recommends that elementary and middle school teacher training in math be strengthened as a means to improve teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom.

Megan Talbott, a second-grade teacher at Basalt Elementary School, Roaring Fork School District, in Basalt, Colo., and Michelle Caldwell, a math teacher at Skyview Middle School, Falcon School District 49, in Falcon, Colo., are among the 72 teachers who have sought reimbursement through the program since the fall of 2007.

Talbott stated that she would not be able to pursue professional development opportunities without financial support from sources such as the Department’s tuition reimbursement program. For Caldwell, the program is an added bonus to the other personal and professional benefits provided by the PBS TeacherLine courses. Both teachers said that the Colorado Department of Education Tuition Reimbursement Program illustrates that the state’s education leaders value the contribution of teachers to student achievement, and are willing to invest in making high-quality professional development accessible to all teachers.

“I enrolled in PBS TeacherLine courses to gain more content area knowledge, for salary advancement, and for guidance in finding and using Internet resources that are instructionally appropriate,” said Talbott, who is taking her sixth PBS TeacherLine course.

Caldwell also is enrolled in her sixth PBS TeacherLine course. She took her first course from PBS TeacherLine in the summer of 2006 to meet highly qualified teacher mandates. When her principal requested she teach seventh and eighth-grade math in addition to sixth-grade math, she was no longer considered highly qualified and needed additional education. “After that I never stopped [taking PBS TeacherLine courses],” Caldwell said. “I want to continually improve and be a better teacher.

“The benefits are continuous,” Caldwell added. “I can be in the middle of a [PBS TeacherLine] class and learn a strategy that I can implement immediately in the classroom, and months from now, I’ll have the credits I need for recertification or salary increases. But, my number one motivation is developing a strong connection with my students and helping them better understand math.”

Success in math opens doors for students to important college and career opportunities, since mathematics plays a critical role in scientific discoveries, technological advancement, engineering accomplishments, public policy, and economics. Students need effective math teachers to lead them on the path to academic success.

Through the PBS TeacherLine courses, Talbott and Caldwell have learned research-based instructional strategies, expanded their mathematical knowledge, and gained new ideas that help them excite and engage their students in math. “In the *Fostering Cooperative Learning, Discussion and Critical Thinking in Elementary Math* course, I discovered how to hold students accountable for their learning and ways to have them work together to understand mathematical concepts and develop essential skills,” said Talbott. “From the *Math in Everyday Life* course, I was able to create a math-based field trip in which students traveled around the school grounds collaborating on and engaging in activities such as measuring objects.”

“From the *Ready to Teach Fractions: Part 1* course, I gained a whole new way of teaching fractions—using more hands-on, concrete activities before immersing students in algorithms and abstract concepts,” Caldwell said. “I need to have interactive projects for the sixth through eighth grade math lab that I teach. The courses in the *Seeing Math Series* are phenomenal—I’ve used the data analysis interactives for the past two years. The students are so enthusiastic to do the activities that they cheer when they see the laptops on the desks. The students not only build their understanding of the concepts, they learn how to manipulate data using various parameters—they are using high-level problem-solving skills.

“I am their cheerleader to get them excited about math and to strive for success, and I am able to do that through the wonderful tools I’ve acquired through PBS TeacherLine,” Caldwell continued. “I haven’t found anything better than PBS TeacherLine. One of the best features of the courses is that most of them culminate in the creation of a lesson plan that incorporates the resources and instructional practices learned in the course. Teachers in the courses exchange lesson plans among themselves. I’ve come away with a wealth of material and knowledge that I can model and share with my peers.”

PBS TeacherLine courses are offered locally to Colorado educators through PBS member station Rocky Mountain PBS. To learn more about the Colorado Department of Education Tuition Reimbursement Program and the approved course offerings from PBS TeacherLine, go to http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/pdssp/download/cal_pbsinfo.pdf. For more information about PBS TeacherLine, visit www.pbs.org/teacherline. A full course catalog is available online.

About PBS TeacherLine

PBS TeacherLine is committed to helping teachers acquire the skills they need to prepare students for a successful future. PBS TeacherLine provides high-quality, affordable professional development through facilitated online courses, collaborative learning communities, and exemplary Internet-based resources. Currently, more than 130 courses across multiple subject areas are offered. Teachers can earn continuing education units, professional development points and graduate credits for course completion. The courses have been developed in conjunction with leading education organizations, including Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), Education Development Center (EDC), Concord Consortium, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and International Society for Technology Education. Created in 2000, PBS TeacherLine is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education for \$6,046,811. This represents approximately 85 percent of the total program funding. The remaining 15 percent is funded through in-kind support from PBS and through program income. For more information, visit www.pbs.org/teacherline.

About PBS

PBS is a media enterprise that serves 355 public noncommercial television stations and reaches nearly 73 million people each week through on-air and online content. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and dramatic entertainment, and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. PBS is a leading provider of digital learning content for pre-K-12 educators and offers a broad array of other educational services. PBS' premier kids' TV programming and Web site, PBS KIDS Online (www.pbskids.org), continue to be parents' and teachers' most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at (www.pbs.org) one of the leading dot-org Web sites on the Internet.

###

Media contacts:

- Kevin Dando, PBS, 703-739-5073, kdando@pbs.org
- Tim Lum, PBS TeacherLine, 703-739-5252, tdlum@pbs.org
- Charlene Blohm, C. Blohm & Associates, Inc., 608-839-9800, charlene@cblohm.com