

Urbana School District 116

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News Release

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Urbana School District Wins Major Federal Grant for History Teaching *District 116 Wins Competitive Grant for Fourth Time*

Urbana School District #116 is pleased to announce that it has won the 2008 Teaching American History Grant for a total of \$999,136 over three years. Urbana School District has won this competitive grant four times – one of the few in the nation to do so. This grant will serve K-12 teachers in Urbana, Champaign, Decatur, Gifford, Heritage, and Tolono. The grant will be administered by District 116.

The Teaching American History Grant will provide continued funding for the American History Teachers Collaborative (AHTC), a project that provides a variety of professional development activities for history teachers.

District 116 Director of Staff Development Kathy Barbour says,

“We are so lucky to have such amazing teachers here in central Illinois. The hard work and innovation of the AHTC teachers in Urbana, Champaign, and our other consortium districts have made these Teaching American History Grants such a success. It is the teachers who are working hand-in-hand with our partner museums and archives staffs to find local primary sources to excite their students. It is the teachers who spend their weekends and summers learning from visiting historians and reading current historical analysis in order to bring their deep understanding of and engagement with history back to their students. It is the teachers who develop creative ways to encourage their students to analyze letters, photographs, documents, records, and other primary sources in order for the students to act as active historians instead of just passive learners.”

Congressman Tim Johnson of Urbana helped District 116 in the grant process. Johnson comments, “One of the most rewarding things about being a Congressman is being in a position to advocate for the needs of the people in your district. The reward is even greater when you can advocate for, and succeed, in getting help for your alma mater - not just where I went to school, but my children and now my grandchildren. Urbana educators should be proud of their success in winning this funding. They put forward a finely crafted proposal in a very competitive environment and prevailed. Hundreds of children will benefit. And as a history major in college, I couldn't be happier for them.”

Urbana School District #116 Superintendent, Dr. Preston Williams, Jr., is grateful the grant has come through a fourth time saying, “We're excited about the grant. We're looking forward to doing real, creative activities with the funds that we have. We have a track record of really producing fantastic results through this particular American History Grant and we have some quality people that really have become know nationally for what we've been able to do with the American History Grant. We're really excited and we think it's a wonderful opportunity for all the districts involved.”

Media wishing to interview Kathy Barbour about the Teaching American History Grant should call the Urbana School District #116 Central Office at 384-3600.

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