

NEWS

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KANSAS AWARDED \$10 MILLION TO HELP CREATE MORE CHARTER SCHOOLS

TOPEKA: The U.S. Department of Education has awarded Kansas a \$10 million, three-year No Child Left Behind grant to help plan, design and create new charter schools and increase the school choices that parents have to provide their children, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced today (Friday, June 16).

Kansas is one of nine states receiving funding through the USDE's Charter Schools Program (CSP), designed to increase national understanding of the charter school model and to expand the number of charter schools available to the nation's students. In addition to providing for the start-up and operation of charter schools, these funds are also used to evaluate charter school effectiveness. The program also aids in the dissemination of information and successful practices.

The other states receiving grants are Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, South Carolina and New Mexico.

Kansas will use its grant funds to expand the number of new high-quality charter schools; disseminate best practices among charter schools and other Kansas public schools; increase the effectiveness of sub grants through expanded technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation; improve student academic performance in charter schools; and develop a statewide charter organization to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of the charter community.

In addition, Kansas will seek to create high quality charter schools that will provide new opportunities for improved pupil learning; increased learning opportunities for pupils in special areas of emphasis; creative, innovative and unconventional instructional techniques and structures; new professional vistas for teachers who operate such schools or who choose to work in them; and for freedom from conventional program constraints and mandates. Kansas aims to grant 20-25 new charters by the end of 2009. The state currently has 28 charters.

As intended in the Kansas Statutes Annotated 72-1903, charter schools in Kansas are independent public schools that operate within a school district structure that provide an alternative means within the public school system for ensuring accomplishment of the necessary outcomes of education. They can be designed and operated by parents, educators, community leaders, education entrepreneurs and others. Charter schools are operated free-of-charge to parents and are open to all students. In addition, every charter school in Kansas is subject to accreditation requirements of the State Board of Education and must be accredited to maintain its charter.

The board of education of any school district may authorize the establishment of a non-sectarian charter school upon receipt of a satisfactory petition. The petition is forwarded to the state board of education for review to determine whether the charter school can reasonably be expected to accomplish the program goals. A charter school that has been approved for establishment by the local school district board of education and the Kansas State Board of Education maintains its charter status for a period of five years.