



## **ESEA Reauthorization Recommendations: Innovative Schools**

### **Policy Recommendations**

- Support federal policies that strengthen and support innovative school models that transform student learning opportunities, such as magnet schools, pilot schools, and career academies, as well as charter schools.
- Encourage expanded learning opportunities within both charter schools and other innovative schools.
- Ensure federal regulatory and funding flexibility in exchange for high performance in the highest-need areas in high-performing, innovative schools, including charter schools and those operated by Charter Management Organizations, in addition to all other high performing, innovative public school options.
- Support innovative approaches in charters and other schools such as workplace learning, student internships, career themed curriculum, service-learning, public and private sector partnerships, and collaborative teacher teams in all public schools.

### **Rationale for Improvements**

Our state and the nation have recognized the critical need to try new and innovative approaches to improving student achievement in our public schools, while holding all public schools accountable for how students learn. Innovative schools can help bring light to high quality and effective practices for increasing student achievement that all schools can adopt. Not only do innovative schools give parents options within the public school system, but the flexibility afforded to them spurs new ways of improving learning that, if proven effective, can be shared with the broader public school system to benefit all students.

Currently, in California and many other states, there is no state financial support for magnets. Magnet programs and other innovative schools receive the regular funding for instruction, but still lack some of the key resources to startup and expand. The federal government only provides limited support in the form of grants to school districts that apply. Charters, magnets, and other innovative schools need additional support and flexibility in developing and maintaining their programs in order to ensure that the needs of all children and families are met.

### **California Overview**

California was one of the 12 states awarded a charter school grant from the U.S. Department of Education in August 2010. The federal government invested a total of \$136 million in this program, whose purpose is to increase financial support for the startup and expansion of public charter schools, build a better national understanding of the public charter school model, and increase the number of high-quality public charter schools across the nation.

The California Department of Education was awarded a total of \$51,769,620 through this grant. In addition, Aspire, a public charter school system in California, received an additional \$5,587,500 for its proposal to create 15 new schools serving an additional 4,500 students in California through the Charter School Grant Program.

Beyond charter schools, California has also developed innovative programs such as the California Partnership Academy model. The California Partnership Academies represent a high school reform movement that is a three-year program (grades ten-twelve) structured as a school-within-a-school with a focus on smaller learning communities with a career theme.

Academies also emphasize student achievement and positive postsecondary outcomes. Academies have been carefully evaluated and shown to have positive impacts on school performance. Key components of the Academy model are:

- Curriculum focused on a career theme and coordinated with related academic classes.
- Voluntary student selection process that identifies interested ninth graders.
- Team of teachers who work together to plan and implement the program.
- Motivational activities with private sector involvement to encourage academic and occupational preparation, such as: integrated and project-based curriculum, mentor program, classroom speakers, field trips, and exploration of postsecondary and career options.
- Workplace learning opportunities such as job shadowing, student internships, and work experience.

California also has various magnet programs and schools that are designed by local authorities to attract parents, guardians, and students who are free to choose, subject to local rules, the school in which they enroll. These programs and schools are established by district Governing Boards who can make a wide range of choices depending upon the needs, demands, board purposes, and available funding. Magnet schools and programs include those that provide unique instruction in the arts, in various sciences, and in career education. When one or more magnets are established at a particular school, students from across the district may select the magnet, subject to available space.